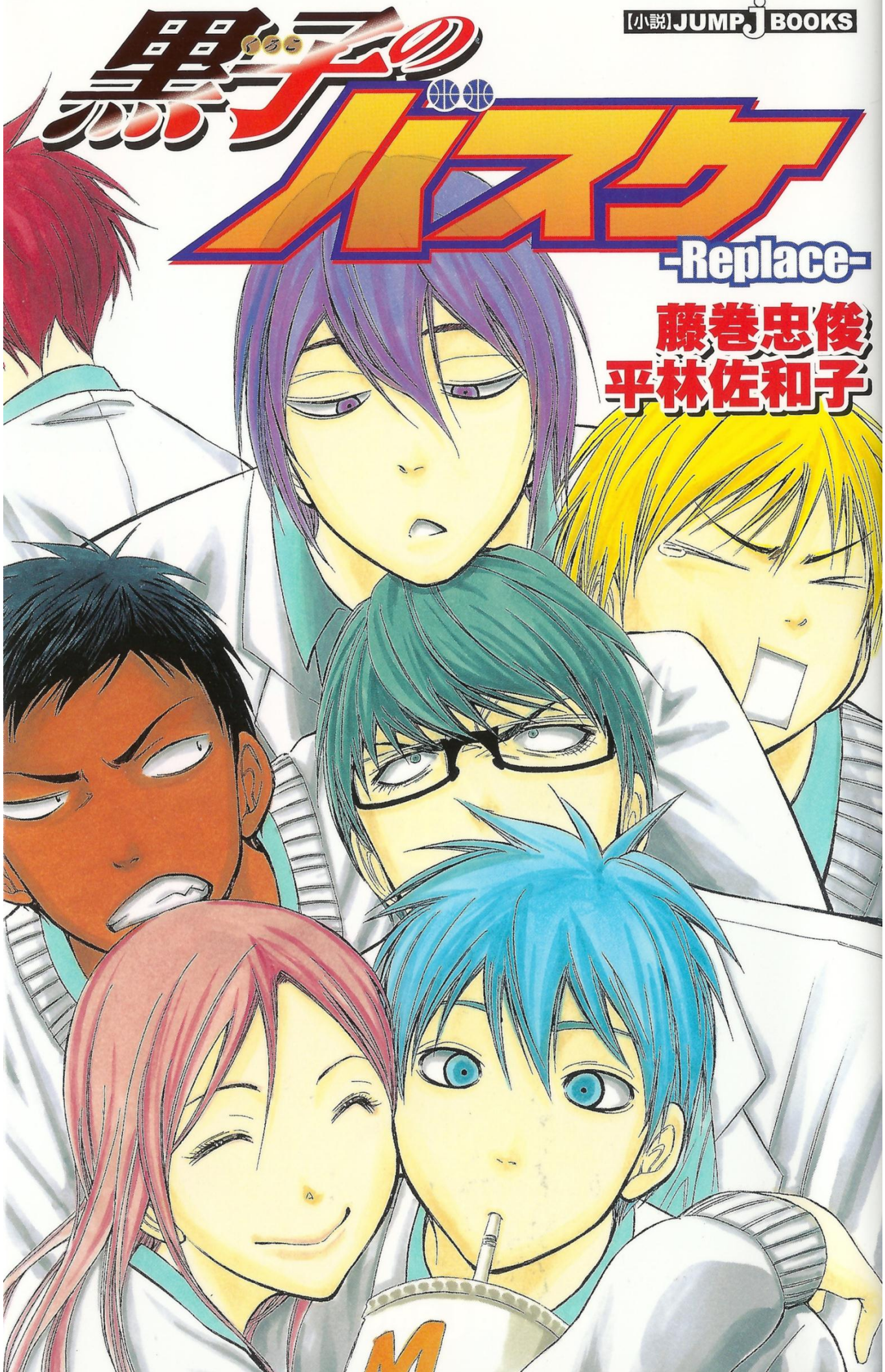


黒子のバスケ

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藤巻忠俊
平林佐和子



The 1st G¹:

Teikou Middle School's Eventful Afterschool

PART 1

Teikou Middle School's basketball team dominated the national middle-school tournaments for three years consecutively. Among their brilliant history/record, there existed an even more glorious period. What people deem geniuses that only appear once in a decade, five of such appeared at the same time. They were the strongest, known by others as the "Generation of Miracles". They were the 'Generation of Miracles' who managed to realize Teikou's motto of 'a hundred battles, a hundred wins'. These five geniuses were: Akashi, Midorima, Murasakibara, Kise, Aomine. Also, there was someone whom these five geniuses acknowledged- The phantom sixth member, Kuroko Tetsuya. This story is about these youths before they were called a miracle and praised throughout the country. It is a story from before they discovered their real strength.

"You rejected!?"

"Hey, d-don't get excited! Shh!"

Momoi Satsuki hurriedly placed her finger on her lips to urge her classmate, Izumi Yayoi, to be quieter. Izumi also quickly covered her mouth with her hands and looked around.

After the sixth period was over, the classroom was very noisy as it was divided into those who were ready to go home, and those who were rushing to get ready for their club activities. No one was paying attention to the two who were chatting secretly at the back of the classroom.

Izumi and Momoi placed their hand over their chest to calm themselves down. Then, as though nothing had happened, Momoi stepped towards the classroom's door and said smilingly to Izumi:

"Then, I have club activities, so..."

"Hey, wait!"

Seeing Momoi grinning as she was about to leave, Izumi grabbed hold of her hand, then placed her hands on her shoulders, put her face close and asked softly:

"Really, why did you have to reject!? The one who confessed was the captain of the volleyball team! He is a super good looking guy with his own fanclub! How can you refuse such a person!?"

"B-But, I don't know him well..."

¹ G represents GAME

Momoi, a little troubled, cast her eyes downwards. Izumi exasperatedly shook her shoulders.

"You can slowly get to know him better after dating him! Such a pity! It's really such a pity, Satsuki! This is already the sixth person who confessed to you this year!"

Izumi continued shaking Momoi's shoulders. Suddenly, she stopped.

"Satsuki... Could it be..."

Her eyes sparkled.

"You already have someone whom you like?"

"Ah!?"

Briefly, Momoi's cheeks flushed red. Of course, this did not escape Izumi's eyes. She firmly hugged Momoi's shoulders, wearing a proud expression as if saying 'Hmph, I found it out!'.

"Oh, oh, no wonder! Who is that person!? Aomine-kun!?"

"Of course not! That guy is merely a childhood friend! It's because he can be too unruly, so I have to keep an eye on him... There's absolutely no other reason!"

"Is that so~? An innocent childhood friend can suddenly become a love interest one day! How romantic! Too perfect! You can even publish it on Ma!"

"Ma? What is that?"

"The magazine Margaret! Known as Ma!"²

Izumi sighed a little frustratedly and gently hit Momoi's forehead.

"Satsuki, you should at least read some shoujo manga. All that you read are related to basketball. Even when it comes to TV, all you watch are other schools' video tapes, right? You should read some shoujo manga sometimes and yearn for love a little. You've been confessed to so many times already, how can you simply not care about love?"

"I-It's not like I don't care about love at all..."

Momoi answered vaguely in a low voice. She knew that her face was already red. In order to not let Izumi find it out, she turned around and escaped from Izumi's arms.

"If I don't go for practice, I'll really be late! I'm going first~"

Waving and saying goodbye to Izumi, Momoi rushed to the gymnasium.

Today, for the basketball club, was a special day.

² um this is where I'm uncertain about 'Ma' and 'Margaret magazine', but the meaning is something like that. it might be a manga instead of a magazine, but i'm really not sure.

It wasn't that there was a competition being held against the other schools. Teikou Middle School was having their midterm exams next week. Even if the athletes were extraordinary gifted, in the end they were still students and had to sit for their exams. Today was every club's final meeting before the exams.

Adding together the four days of exams as well as the week before the exams, it meant that there was a total of eleven days whereby club activities can not be held. For the passionate basketball club members, this was torture, thus this day's activities were very important to them.

This was why when Momoi entered the gymnasium and heard a third year senior say "Today after finishing the basic training, we'll end it at that.", she widened her eyes in surprise.

"Only doing basic training... Would this be okay?"

Momoi thought that she heard the senior wrongly, so she looked for the senior to confirm it. However, the senior merely nodded and said: "Yes."

"It's Akashi who said that today would be only basic training."

"Akashi-kun...?"

Momoi looked at the club members who were training. She spotted Akashi among the teams running laps around the court. Akashi was, as usual, doing the training seriously.

"If Akashi said so, he must have his reasons."

"That's true."

Overhearing the seniors, Momoi still did not understand but agreed to the decision that had been made. If it was Akashi's proposal, then she did not intend to oppose it.

Akashi's proposals always exceeded everyone's expectations. However, every time, people would be able to appreciate the appropriateness of the proposals afterwards.

The best example would be when Akashi discovered the phantom sixth member of the Generation of Miracles.

"That... Would it be related to the decision for me to sit out?"

Momoi jumped back in surprise at the sudden sound.

"Momoi-san, are you alright?"

"T-Tetsu-kun?"

The one who had spoken was Kuroko Tetsuya, the one whom Momoi was looking for.

Kuroko was standing outside the court wearing his usual practice clothes. He was right beside Momoi, only observing.

"Tetsu-kun, wh-why are you here!? Ah, huh? Sitting out?"

Startled, Momoi could only let out her question hoarsely, which wouldn't a surprising reaction if the person you were looking for suddenly appeared in front of you.

"Today Akashi-kun suddenly asked me to observe. Why is this so?"

Kuroko muttered.

Even though he had the usual expressionless face, but his tone sounded as if he was dissatisfied.

"Akashi-kun? He let you observe?"

The finally calmed Momoi asked. Kuroko answered:

"Yes."

"If that's what Akashi-kun said, then you should just quietly observe."

The senior patted Kuroko's shoulder and left for practice.

"But today is the last training before the exams..."

Kuroko gave a small sigh.

Since the senior had already said so, it meant that the decision could not be changed. Kuroko could only stay next to Momoi and watch the other members train.

Momoi scanned the court, but she was very conscious of the sixth member of the Generation of Miracles. She remembered Izumi's words.

"You already have someone whom you like?"

Momoi glanced towards Kuroko, who stared unblinkingly at the court.

It's probably... a crush on that person standing next to her, the one with a low sense of presence.

To be honest, it was only recently that she noticed Kuroko.

It started out from a small incident. A few days ago after club activities ended, the male members of the club as usual dropped by a convenient store that was on the way home. Momoi was with them, but as the only girl, she could not fit into the loud crowd of boys.

She could only watch them from afar, her face probably inadvertently having the expression of "No matter what, I still really envy them~".

It was at this moment when Kuroko suddenly appeared in front of her.

"I don't need this. Please have it."

"What?"

Kuroko handed to her the wooden stick from an eaten ice-cream. Because it was too sudden, Momoi didn't react but blindly accepted the stick. "What is this?" She suspiciously looked at the stick, and she was greeted by the words 'you won a prize'.

It was this event which sparked Momoi's heart.

Kuroko's every action was perfect in Momoi's eyes. He noticed her feelings and effortlessly helped her to be part of the group. Not only that, he did not seem to be patronizing at all.

Truth to be told, no one knows what Kuroko was thinking at that time, but Momoi stubbornly believed what she wanted to.

That was the reason why she began to notice Kuroko.

Once she began to pay attention to Kuroko, she discovered things about him that was previously unnoticed. During competitions, his sense of presence changed drastically from being weak, to a compelling one. He created a completely unique basketball style of his own, and his actions were beyond the calculated expectations. Whenever she saw such a Kuroko, the interest in him grew.

One day, Momoi suddenly realized.

-Could it be, could this be love?

However, she didn't know whether this kind of feeling could be called 'love'. To say that 'the wooden stick from the ice cream was the beginning of this love' sounded like a joke, even to her.

If Izumi knew about this, she would probably say 'You think too much!'. But this was Momoi's first time being conscious of a guy, and it is a first that should be treasured, hence Momoi made up her mind to be careful.

This was why there was a need to analyse Kuroko. Although this was the first time Momoi was experiencing such a restless heart, she still used her innate analysis skills to observe the boy next to her.

What brought Momoi out of her thoughts were the cheers from the court.

"Wow!"

The training had progressed to the ball passing phase. This was a three-man exercise where they had to sprint and pass the ball from one side of the court to the other. After reaching the end of the court, they had to shoot the ball. At that moment, it was a shot by Aomine.

His position was behind the basketball backboard, facing Momoi's direction. It seemed that he scored a shot from behind the backboard.

"That guy still likes to fool around..."

Momoi couldn't help but smile.

"But, he's very good."

As though wanting to match up to Momoi's words to herself, Kuroko replied.

"Aomine-kun is really very strong."

Having that said, Kuroko bent over to pick up the basketball that had rolled next to him.

It was at that moment Momoi felt that she had understood why Akashi had Kuroko observe from the sidelines.

PART 2

Seeing that Aomine has returned to the starting point at the court, Kise excitedly ran over to ask:

"Aominecchi! What was that just now! How did that even go in!?"

"For that you simply... Yeah, how did it go in?"

Aomine tilted his head belatedly.

"You don't even know!?"

"This kind of thing is uncertain. As long as the ball can go in, isn't that enough."

Aomine laughed offhandedly.

"That said, basic training is important, but I still want to play a match after all."

"Me too me too! I want to have a match against Aominecchi!"

Kise very excitedly raised his hand in approval.

"You both should work harder on your exams, not just on matches."

Midorima, who was at the side and listening in, advised as he adjusted his glasses.

"Especially for Aomine. Don't barely pass this time.

"Don't worry about such stuff. I can pass after revising my notes once."

"Can you even consider that as notes! In class all you know to do is to sleep. I've seen it clearly, you don't even make notes."

"Che, what are you caring about me for... Are you my stalker?"

"What kind of joke are you making! It's not like I wanted to sit behind you!"³

"Ah- ...Really? ...We're in the same class?"

"Go remember your classmates' faces!"

"Ah, what does it matter. Isn't it, Murasakibara."

Aomine looked up to look at Murasakibara who was waiting for his turn at the ball passing exercise. Murasakibara slowly turned around and nodded expressionlessly.

"I probably can't remember how the classmates look like."

"What!? We are in the same class!"

Kise looked on with a shocked expression.

"Hey, do your training properly. Don't think that just because it's a basic training, you can laze off."

In the end, they were told off by a senior member.

The four of them obediently replied "Yeeeeees.", and finished the basic training with renewed concentration until it was close to evening.

PART 3

After training, it is the first years' duty to clean up the court. While they were mopping the floor, Momoi would record and arrange the practice menu and trainings of each player. These records could be useful during a competition.

Kuroko was no longer at the basketball court as he had already gone to the locker room to change his clothes. A few days ago, because he was Kise's personal instructor, Kuroko had to stay back to oversee Kise cleaning up. However, after Kise became a regular player, both of them became free.

Momoi was skilfully recording the progress in a notebook when she heard someone calling her.

³ direct translation would be 'who was it who let me sit behind you', but I felt that this translation is more suitable

"Momo-chin~"

Murasakibara came up to her with such a laidback expression, it would have been difficult for someone to think that he played the high paced sport of basketball.

Looking up from her notebook, she saw that it was Murasakibara and puffed up her cheeks.

"Muk-kun! I told you so many times already, don't call me that!"

"Eh~ Why? It's easier to call you that, and it's also so cute. Isn't that good?"

"What do you mean by cute! Also, you need to pronounce one more syllable than if you were to call my real name."

"Mm? Really? Ah, such things aren't important."

"What do you mean by not important..."

Momoi couldn't help but sigh. It wasn't her first time coming across Murasakibara's habit of refusing to listen. To communicate with him, one must be able to know to give up early and have an open mind.

"That aside... Muk-kun, what did you look for me for?"

"Ah, that's right. Aka-chin asked me to pass a message to you~"

"Akashi-kun?"

Momoi instantly wore a serious expression. If it's a message from Akashi, it must be very important. However, judging by the recent club activities, there shouldn't be anything to worry about. She couldn't think of anything that he would want to say. Momoi paid full attention while waiting for Murasakibara to speak, only to hear:

"Aka-chin asks Momo-chin to go back home with Kuro-chin after school~"

"Huh?"

Momoi was stunned.

Going home together after school... What does that mean?

At first, Momoi pondered over what it could mean, but then she thought of how going home together with Kuroko would turn out, and finally an image of Akashi looking down at her with his face tilting upwards with an all-knowing expression popped up.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

Embarrassed and happy at the same time, Momoi's shout gave even Murasakibara a shock.

This would be the first time she would go home with her probable crush.

When Momoi left for the school's entrance, the place where Akashi instructed to meet up, her heart was filled with expectations. However, when the school's entrance was within sight, all her hopes were shattered.

"Why did Akashi-kun asked me to go home together with Momoi-san?"

Kuroko had already reached the school entrance, and was waiting for Momoi while slightly puzzled.

"Since it's Aka-chin who said so, there must be a reason then?"

The one who answered him was Murasakibara, who was standing next to him.

"If there must be a reason, then there would only be one, right? Isn't that so, Aominecchi?"

After hearing what Murasakibara said, Kise smiled knowingly and said while turning to Aomine. However, Aomine was not interested at all, but gave a big yawn and said:

"It doesn't matter... Satsuki, let me borrow your notes for a while."

"Aomine! How can you only depend on Momoi's notes!"

Midorima raised his voice. Akashi was beside him reading a book indifferently.

"...Could it be, everyone's going home together?"

Momoi asked uneasily. Other than Akashi, everyone nodded.

"Something like that. After making a copy of your notes I'm going home." said Aomine.

"No, no! If you leave midway, then there's no meaning!" Kise quietly said to Aomine.

"I'll probably follow you all to the convenience store~" Murasakibara said.

"I was actually planning to go home alone, but I changed my mind. I will go together with you all for a while." Midorima said.

Momoi started to have a headache. There's no need to even consider being able to go home together with Kuroko happily. Somehow, the situation turned into going home with a bunch of problematic boys.

Finally, the creator of the whole situation, Akashi, quietly said:

"Momoi, I'll leave the rest to you. Don't let Kuroko run about, send him straight home."

"Ah? Hey, Akashi-kun!?"

Momoi hurriedly called after him, but Akashi merely strode away, raising a hand to wave back.

"H-He actually just left like that..."

Momoi could only stare at Akashi's back as he left.

"What does he mean by 'don't let him run about', does he think he's a teacher!"

Aomine said after glancing towards Akashi. Hearing him, Kuroko said: "If Akashi-kun was a teacher, it would be very easy to understand the lessons." Kise added: "But what he says would definitely be very deep. I reckon I won't understand even after listening."

"Alright, these things aren't important. Anyway, let's go to a convenience store first. I have to make a copy of Satsuki's notes."

Hearing Aomine's orders, the other members nodded in agreement and started to move. Momoi hurriedly stopped them.

"Hey, wait! Tetsu-kun and I won't be going to the convenience store!"

"Why?"

Aomine who was in walking at the front of the group turned back to ask.

"The notes which I want to copy are yours. How can you not come along?"

"Didn't you hear what he said? Akashi-kun said to bring Tetsu-kun home and to not let him run around. How can I go to the convenience store."

Momoi's eyes were burning with the passion to carry out the mission.

"That's why today we're going to go home straight!"

"It'll only be for a while, what does it matter. Going to the convenience store isn't running around."

"No! Definitely no!"

Momoi stubbornly refused to give in. Annoyed, Aomine scratched his head and said: "Why are you so obedient towards him..."

At this moment, Kuroko suddenly raised his hand and said:

"Um... A few days ago I took a day off from Japanese class."

"Huh?"

Everyone stared at Kuroko to know what he wanted to say after suddenly saying such a random phrase.

"Momoi-san, can you lend me your notes as well to make a copy?"

"Ah? ...Ah!?"

Kuroko's sudden request shook Momoi's resolve.

What to do... But, Tetsu-kun requests very little things from me...

The sudden turn of events made Momoi confused and obviously uncertain of what to do. Kuroko bowed, giving Momoi the final blow.

"I'll have to depend on you."

It may be because the surrounding boys were all very tall, but Kuroko bowing made him seem like a small, cute animal. Momoi's heart beat faster and her earlier stubborn resolve was thrown to the side.

"Al-Alright then. Only to the convenience store! After making a copy, we're going home right away!"

Despite saying that, Momoi couldn't help but feel her cheeks starting to get hot.

"Then let's go."

Once again Aomine ordered, and they started to move once again.

It feels like I've been tricked...

Momoi used her hand to fan herself to cool down while following them closely behind. Midorima, who was at the end of the group, suddenly turned around to look at Momoi.

"Momoi, do you always lend your notes to Aomine before the exams?"

"Ah? Mm, yes..."

Midorima slowed down to walk next to Momoi.

"You take care of him too much."

"Mm... I also think so. But if I don't let him read it, there's no need for Aomine-kun to sit for the exam to know that he'd fail..."

"Then... In other words Aomine only manages to pass after looking at your notes?"

"Is that so?"

"Momoi... How do you make your notes?"

"Eh? How to make?"

With such odd questions, Momoi unintentionally replied him with a question. Midorima looked at Momoi with a serious face.

"Do you use a mechanic pencil? Or coloured pens? No, what kind of notebook do you use? Do you use a specific kind of notebook for only the notes for exams!?"

"Hey, hey, wait a bit, slow down, Midorin!"

Momoi gestured for him to calm down. Midorima, as though realizing after his string of questions, coughed a bit as though wanting to gloss it over.

"I'm only a bit concerned."

"Concerned? About my notes?"

Midorima did not answer but looked on in front of him:

"This year after being in the same class as Aomine, I've never seen him being awake in any of the classes. However, even though that guy wouldn't get a high score for exams, he can still pass. I'm guessing that the secret of him passing is your notes."

"Secret... It's not that dramatic..."

"Not letting up a single possibility. This is what it means by doing what you can do."

Hearing what Midorima had said, Momoi suddenly thought of something: "Could it be..."

"Midorin, if you don't mind, do you want a copy of my notes as well?"

"What!? Really!?"

Midorima's eyes momentarily brightened, but he quickly hid it by adjusting his glasses.

"I-It wasn't that I thought of copying your notes."

"Mn. It's me who suggested lending them to you."

"Ah?"

Midorima furrowed his eyebrows in confusion. Momoi answered with a laugh:

"If the secret behind Aomine-kun being able to pass is because of my notes, then I want to be sure of it. Midorin, after you look at my notes, you should be able to know what the secret is, right?"

"Ah, mn... I see."

Midorima nodded in agreement.

"Since that is so, it'll be alright if I help you to look through."

Seeing Midorima putting up a strong front with his words, but secretly being happy, Momoi laughed as she said:

"For this time's exams, if you can beat Akashi-kun that'll be good."

"Mn, this time I must beat him!"

Midorima didn't notice Momoi's insinuation and accidentally said what he was actually thinking.

Even though Midorima was very serious in his studies, but during exams he has never beat Akashi even once. Of course, his proud nature made him dissatisfied with the situation. Momoi even heard that every time before the exams, Midorima would try different methods in order to defeat Akashi. It seems that this time, he decided to choose the 'notes which can make Aomine no longer fail' tactic.

For Momoi, it's difficult to imagine Akashi losing to anyone in any area, but it's up to one's own decision when it comes to deciding who to support.

"However, even if it's for the sake of finding out the secret, I feel a bit bad for borrowing your notes to make a copy. I will definitely repay you for this favour."

Momoi smiled at Midorima being very polite and gently shook her head.

"It's alright, it's only copying the notes. Look at Aomine, that guy has never once even thanked me."

PART 4

On the other side, Kise was clinging onto Aomine and asking him questions non-stop.

"Aominecchi, how did you grasp the basics of playing basketball?"

"How long do you usually do your calisthenics at home?"

"I heard that when you were a kid, you made your own basketball hoop?"

Kise kept throwing questions towards Aomine.

However, no matter what question it was, Aomine would dismiss him with simple answers such as "unknowingly" "like normal" "don't remember".

"Aominecchi, give a proper answer!"

Kise finally couldn't help but complain.

"I'm answering you very seriously. It's you who's asking things that are too detailed."

Aomine replied impatiently. He was unable to refuse Kise's string of questions, and also because this guy was as enthusiastic as he was when having a one on one training match,

as someone who played basketball on instinct, Aomine naturally simply did not have such patience.⁴

"How about this, we'll end the questioning session~ Say something that's fun."

"Fun? Such as?"

Kise asked with a dissatisfied tone. Aomine looked up and thought for a while, before saying:

"You're a model, aren't you. The modelling world has nothing interesting?"

"Modelling world..." Kise buried himself in his thoughts, then snapped his fingers and said:

"A while back when I was having a shoot for the front cover of a magazine, there was a makeup artist who was really enthusiastic. After all, for us models, to be a front cover star is what we aim to be, and can be of the top ranks. Anyway, that makeup artist gave me a very detailed makeover. Even starting from the foundation, he already put it extremely carefully. No, shouldn't be 'put', should be that he spent a bit more time to let the foundation be applied to the skin. Then...."

"Tetsu. Do you have any interesting topics?"

Totally ignoring what Kise was saying, Aomine turned to Kuroko and spoke to him.

"Hey! Aominecchi, that's too much! It's because you asked me to tell you something I'm sharing the story!"

Hearing Kise's complaints, Aomine pouted and said:

"But what you're talking about is makeup. It's really boring."

"This is just the beginning. After a while it'll be interesting!"

"Doesn't that mean that I must wait until the interesting part? Too troublesome. Just start from the interesting part."

"Why are you so unreasonable..."

Kise dejectedly drooped his shoulders. Aomine completely did not bother, but continued talking to Kuroko:

"Tetsu, what are you guys talking about?"

"What we're talking about..."

Kuroko raised his head to look at Murasakibara who was walking beside him.

⁴ not too sure about the 'playing basketball on instinct' part, but should be correct

"We're talking about snacks~ Because Kuro-chin mentioned that he discovered a new flavoured cracker stick."

Murasakibara answered while looking with his blur and sleepy eyes.

"Oh, what kind of new flavour?"

Aomine seemed to be interested, and urged him to continue. Kise sighed: "The interesting thing which you want to listen to about is cracker sticks!?" In the end he was ignored by everyone else.

"How it's like... It's a taste which makes people want to try it once."

After that, Murasakibara sleepily yawned, so Kuroko continued explaining.

"Last time when I was at the arcade, I discovered it by chance. I think it's a new chili oil tomato flavour."

"Chilli oil tomato flavour!? What is that? Would people usually mix those two flavours?"

"Say, Kurokocchi, you also go to arcades!?"

Finally getting over the hurt from Aomine's coldness, Kise also joined in the conversation. He really could not imagine how Kuroko would be like when silently playing games in the arcade.

Kuroko nodded and said:

"I really enjoy going there. I'm good at playing the claw crane."

"Kurokocchi playing the claw crane in an arcade..."

An image of Kuroko silently playing the claw crane alone came into Kise's mind.

Somehow, it's quite lonely... He could not help but think.

But if it's Kuroko who's playing, maybe he could power up and easily catch a big doll. Then, he'd silently leave the arcade alone, without anyone knowing that he had came by. With that, maybe a rumour of the 'elusive claw crane king' would begin... Kise started to let his imagination run wild. He must get to the bottom of this matter! His eyes suddenly sparkled.

"Kurokocchi, do you want to go to the arcade for a while?"

"Ah? What are you saying all of a sudden?"

Before Kuroko could speak, Aomine interrupted.

"But, don't you want to see how Kurokocchi plays the claw crane?"

"No way. Go to the convenience store first. Right, Kuro-chin."

Murasakibara interrupted in a sleepy voice. Kuroko continued to add.

"We had just said to go to the convenience store to look for the new flavoured cracker sticks."

"But, those new flavours were found at the arcade. So wouldn't it be the same if we went to the arcade?"

"Compared to those prizes from the games, isn't it more convenient to buy it directly from the convenience store. I also want to buy some other snacks."

"I also want to quickly copy Satsuki's notes. Let's go to the convenience store."

Kise had no choice but to give up. Everyone went to the direction of the convenience store as planned.

At the convenience store, Momoi, Aomine and Midorima rushed to the photocopy machine, Kuroko and Murasakibara went straight to the snacks section. Kise was left alone outside the store to wait for everyone else.

In the end, not even three minutes later, Momoi and Midorima came out of the store.

"Eh? That's fast."

Kise was surprised.

"The photocopier can't be used."

Aomine reluctantly replied.

"A large number of our school's students came in to make copies of notes, so the photocopier's ran out of paper. Really, copying someone else's notes right before exam's too outrageous."

Midorima adjusted his glasses unhappily.

"Hey, you also wanted to make a copy of Satsuki's notes."

Aomine immediately blurted.

"It's because Momoi had made a request to me, so I had to accept. Also, I normally would also make my own notes. I made a copy only in order to investigate, it's different from you."

"What do you mean it's different from me. I really can't understand you."

Aomine's opinion was fully supported by Kise.

"Everyone's really fast."

This time it was Kuroko and Murasakibara coming out of the store. Murasakibara was holding a plastic bag from the convenience store.

"Did you manage to get your chilli oil tomato flavoured cracker sticks?"

Kise asked, but Murasakibara lifelessly shook his head.

"Such a pity..."

"The chilli oil tomato flavour is found in very few stores. It's not sold here."

Kuroko again explained while he followed behind. The bag which Murasakibara was holding seemed to contain other kinds of snacks.

Kise explained that Aomine and the others were unable to make copies.

"No choice, let's go and check other convenience stores."

Hearing Aomine's suggestion, Momoi loudly opposed:

"What!? This wasn't agreed on in the beginning!"

Midorima did not join in the conversation, but said to himself:

"However, the convenience stores that are within walking distance would probably be in the same situation. Our school has a lot of students."

"I don't like walking around for nothing~"

Murasakibara mumbled with his mouth stuffed with the newly purchased potato chips.

Momoi took the opportunity to announce:

"That's why, today we shall stop here! Let's split. Tetsu-kun shouldn't run around anymore. Isn't that right, Tetsu-kun?"

Momoi turned around to look at Kuroko, who gently scratched his cheek and said:

"I know a place."

"What?"

Everyone stared at Kuroko.

"The arcade I normally go to has a photocopier. Because very little people know of it, so the students from our school probably would not go there. Also, it is that arcade which I discovered that new flavoured cracker stick."

"Then let's go there."

"No!"

Momoi, who had received Akashi's orders, shouted with all her might:

"Tetsu-kun can not run around! We absolutely can not gooooo!"

PART 5

Dinglingling~ Hearing the lively tune, Momoi hung her head tiredly.

"In the end we still came..."

Even though she strongly opposed, Momoi was ignored and dragged along by everyone to a small, cosy arcade that was located on the rooftop of a nearby mall.

"Although it's an arcade, but it's actually just a few arcade consoles placed together." Kise thought after looking around, and it was indeed the case.

It seems that when it was first built, it was intended for it to be a place where shoppers with their children could relax for a while. Thus, there weren't any athletic or fighting games.

The photocopy machine which Kuroko mentioned was casually placed in a corner which no one would pay any attention to. Midorima and Aomine tried putting in a ten yen coin, wondering "Does this thing still work?" Of course, the machine had no problems. The amount of pages it would print is as per it is paid. Midorima and Aomine immediately started working on making copies, occasionally arguing along the lines of "Can you align the sides and edges properly before copying?" "Haih, something like this will do."

The notes that Kuroko wanted to copy were left to those two to copy. Momoi, Kuroko and the others went together to a console that was at the corner of the arcade.

"If you manage to get a high score for this game, you can get a prize."

Kuroko pointed at a dancing game. That dancing game was DDR.

"This game still hasn't died out yet..."

Kise looked at the game in amazement.

"What is this, a famous game?"

Murasakibara tilted his head and asked while holding his snack. He seemed to not know it at all.

"It used to be much more popular last time. You follow the directions on the screen and step on the sensors on the floor. Look, just like that."

Momoi pointed at another DDR machine where a presumably elementary school student was dancing on. He was probably an expert at the game as his movements were flawless as he skilfully stepped on the sensors.

Kuroko inserted a few coins into the console and explained: "If you can pass the stage on medium mode and have very few mistakes, then the prize is the chilli oil tomato cracker stick." Upon hearing that, Murasakibara, who was snacking, stopped.

"Mn... Alright. Even though I don't have any confidence, I shall give it a try."

He licked the crumbs off his hands and walked to the game.

"This... The pictures aren't clear..."

"It's Muk-kun who's too tall..."

Momoi blurted when she heard Murasakibara's complaints. At this moment, Kuroko stretched out his hand and said: "Start from the basic mode first." Then he pressed the start button. Accompanied by loud music, the screen displayed the instructions on the steps to take. However...

"Muk-kun! Right! Step on your right!"

"Ah? Ah, here?"

"Murasakibara-kun, that's left."

"Ah, here?"

"The game's instructions have changed already!"

Even though it was expected, but as a beginner, Murasakibara's score was too horrible to look at.

"This is difficult."

Murasakibara tiredly said as he stepped off the console.

"After that's my turn!"

Kise confidently stepped onto the console.

"Ki-chan, you've played this before?"

Momoi asked, to which Kise answered while making a peace sign:

"First time playing, but it should be okay."

Of course, in the end he was hopeless.

"Aw, didn't expect it to be so difficult! If the basic mode's already so difficult, then how's the medium mode's going to be like!?"

As he stepped off the console, Kise was greeted by a few icy stares.

"Ki-chan, you're a model, how come your sense of rhythm is so horrible..."

"Even if you're a beginner, it's also too bad."

"You didn't even reach the score I got earlier."

"Hey! What are you guys trying to say! Don't be so mean! Of course the first time would be like that!!"

Although Kise was not satisfied, but the other three quietly looked at each other, nodded and said: "But you really were..." It was true. Kise's movements were too stiff. It was as though a robot was stepping around at the same place.

As though he was recalling it, Murasakibara gave a small burst of laughter.

Seeing their reactions, Kise took it more seriously.

"Ah, enough! I will definitely get a high score for the medium mode and show you guys!"

He announced.

"Ki-chan, before you manage to get a high score, your wallet would be empty."

"Relax! I have my ways!"

Kise held his head high and pointed at the other DDR machine. The elementary school student was still immersed in the game.

"I'll observe his movements, and then I'll copy it completely."

"What!?"

Momoi loudly asked in surprise. Even Kuroko and Murasakibara didn't expect that.

"Can that be copied!?"

"Of course it can. As long as I see the movement once, I can copy it perfectly."

"But Ki-chan you don't have the slightest sense of rhythm... Are you sure you can copy that?"

"I'll remember even his sense of rhythm."

After that, as though he was telling them to no longer speak to him, Kise turned his back towards the three of them and stared unblinkingly at the elementary school student. As a result, the kid got scared.

Noticing Kise's stare, he got a little frightened and stopped dancing for a while. However, the game had yet to end, and as he probably did not want to give up on a game that has already started, he re-entered the game, hoping to not be too affected by Kise's stare. With that, the elementary school student continued dancing while a junior school student was staring unblinkingly at him.

"What is this..."

Momoi couldn't help but say.

"Since we came here, does Momoi-san want to give it a try?"

Kuroko pointed at the game and said.

"Kise-kun probably would take a while before he can finish copying."

"...That's true."

Like that, Momoi also stepped onto the console.

Although Momoi's sense of rhythm was not bad, but in the end she was still a beginner. At the end of the game, her score was just average.

"Even playing at only basic mode can make you sweat."

Momoi wiped the sweat off her forehead as she stepped off the console.

"Muk-kun, maybe you should wait until that new flavour is introduced in convenience stores before you buy it."

"Ah... That's right."

Hearing Momoi's words, although Murasakibara agreed, but his tone sounded a little unwilling.

At this moment, another voice cut in.

"No need for that!"

It was Kise.

The kid from the neighbouring console had just finished a game. Kise hurriedly jumped onto the console to get ready.

"The highlight's coming up!"

He confidently pressed the start button and selected the level. Accompanied by the lively music, the instructions for the steps needed were very complex.

"You really want to play at medium mode!?"

Momoi blinked in surprised.

However, that was not what was most surprising. Kise's legs moved deftly, following the instructions exactly.

"Even the rhythm was copied perfectly."

Even Murasakibara was shocked and kept staring at Kise.

"It's only the beginning!"

As though on cue to Kise's shouts, the music became faster. However, Kise's movements also followed and increased in speed.

"Amazing..."

Momoi watched until she forgot to blink.

After the music ended, Kise also stopped. Momoi and Murasakibara couldn't help but applaud him for his bravery. Kise managed to get the new high score on that console, which switched its display screen to show an evaluation of his score.

"Like this, we can get that cracker stick."

Kise leaned onto the railing of the console and breathed heavily to catch his breath.

"Mn, we can definitely get it! Isn't that so, Tetsu-kun!"

Momoi happily turned to Kuroko, but couldn't find him.

"Eh? That's strange."

She looked around. Even Kise and Murasakibara joined in to look for Kuroko, but he could not be found.

"Mn~ When did he disappear?"

Murasakibara tilted his head and asked, puzzled. However, even Momoi and Kise had no idea at all.

"Tetsu-kun!? Where are you!?"

Momoi was anxiously about to leave the arcade to look for him, but heard:

"What's wrong?"

Kuroko popped up from nowhere.

"Tetsu-kun!? That's great!! Really, where did you run off to!"

Seeing that Momoi was about to cry from distress, Kuroko sheepishly scratched his cheek.

"Sorry, I went to collect the prize."

"Ah? Prize?"

Not knowing what Kuroko meant, Momoi asked as she tilted her head.

"This."

Kuroko showed a transparent plastic bag with snacks inside. There were chilli oil tomato flavoured cracker sticks inside.

"Ah, this, could it be..."

Guessing what Murasakibara was about to say, Kuroko nodded.

"It's the snacks which are used as a prize."

"Oh, so you went to get my prize?"

Hearing Kise, Kuroko shook his head.

"No, this was won by me."

"What?"

This time, other than Kuroko, everyone else was confused.

"I also played a round of DDR."

"What!?"

The three of them were extremely shocked. Kuroko took no notice of them and pointed to the console which Kise was playing earlier.

"When Kise-kun was playing, I used the console next to it."

"No way..."

Momoi was speechless. The DDR machine was very loud when played. No matter how engrossed they were in Kise's skills, they shouldn't have not noticed Kuroko playing at the side...

Moreover, what Momoi regretted even more was not being able to see how Kuroko played DDR.

She tugged her shoulders. Ehhhhhh, I really want to see how Tetsu-kun plays games!

Not noticing Momoi's discontentment, Kuroko gave the snacks to Murasakibara. As though suddenly remembering, he added:

"Oh, that's right. The score which Kise-kun got. The final prize isn't snacks."

"What!? Is that true!?"

Hearing Kuroko's words, Kise leaned over the railings.

"The prize for getting a high score on medium mode is snacks, but if you manage to get the highest score, the prize is something else."

"Th-Then I wasted so much effort..."

Kise slumped onto the railings in dismay. However, after winning the prize, he may as well collect it. He stood up and went to collect his prize.

On the other side, Murasakibara impatiently took a bite of the cracker stick.

"Oh... Oh!"

For the first time that day, his eyes sparkled.

"This is too delicious..."

Crunch crunch crunch. Murasakibara ate the cracker stick while reaching for another.

"Muk-kun, drink something. Later your throat will become dry."

Momoi worriedly looked at him.

"True... I'll go find a vending machine." Murasakibara said and then left.

"Muk-kun really disregards anything else once he sees a snack..."

Watching Murasakibara leave until he went past a corner and out of sight, Momoi finally realized a very important fact.

Just now the four of them were together. Now that two of them have left, then wouldn't it now be... only the two of them!?

Her heart started to beat faster.

Unknowingly, the location was an arcade, but for junior school students, it could be considered as a common location.

That's right. This is a date. This situation right now can be viewed as a date.

Also, this arcade which could be considered a dating location had a rather good environment. Momoi's heart was cheering, but her mind retorted: That's not right, you

aren't even sure whether you like him. Hearing her heart and mind arguing, Momoi suddenly recalled the reason for this situation.

Kuroko was looking at other games when he heard Momoi ask:

"Tetsu-kun, after playing, are you still alright?"

"What do you mean?"

Kuroko was somewhat confused and asked. Momoi opened her mouth to clarify the issue she had in mind:

"Because Tetsu-kun, you..."

"For you as thanks."

A fluorescent plastic bottle suddenly popped up between the two of them.

"Thank you for winning the snacks for me. This is my treat to Kuro-chin."

Murasakibara, who just came back from buying drinks from the vending machine, slot himself between the two of them.

"Thank you."

Kuroko accepted the drink.

"Huh? Momo-chin also wants one?"

Murasakibara innocently asked, not knowing that he had interrupted Momoi and Kuroko's time together.

"No, it's nothing."

Having been interrupted, Momoi didn't have the courage to continue and could only laugh it off. Anyway, a new matter had come up for her.

"Muk-kun, that bottle you just bought has a very strange colour..."

"Really? I like this brand."

Murasakibara slowly answered while raising the bottle of drink in his hand. It was the same colour as the one he gave Kuroko. The fluorescent bottle was labelled 'Summer Colour Lemon Sunshine Fizzy Drink'. Although it was lemon flavoured, but the colour was fluorescent red.

"I really can't imagine how it would taste..."

Momoi pouted as she looked at the bottle of drink. Truthfully, it seemed to be unhealthy.

Tetsu-kun, can this thing really be drunk? Momoi started to worry. She looked at Kuroko, who was in the middle of taking a big gulp. Momoi stared at the bottle in horror.

"T-Tetsu-kun? Are you still alright?"

If Tetsu-kun were to faint like that, what would happen? Momoi imagined the worst scenario while asking worriedly. Kuroko nodded and said:

"This is actually quite tasty."

"Ah!?"

It was a surprise. However, what he said next was even more surprising for Momoi:

"Here, do you want to drink it?"

"Ah?"

Kuroko handed over the bottle which he had just drunk from.

"I've had a bit already. If you don't mind..."

Momoi widened her eyes in surprise and looked to and fro from Kuroko to the bottle.

Wouldn't this be... Her cheeks reddened.

...An indirect kiss!?

Even though she was internally shaken, non-stop asking herself "what to do what to do what should I do?", but on the surface, Momoi calmly extended her hand to accept the bottle and said a word of thanks.

Kuroko placed the bottle in Momoi's hand.

Should I drink should I drink but if I don't drink I'll feel guilty? As though she was explaining herself to an unknown person, Momoi raised the bottle to her lips.

However, at this moment.

"Oh, looks like it's nice to drink."

Aomine, who had finished photocopying, suddenly took the bottle which Momoi was about to drink from and gulped the bottle down.

Having the bottle suddenly snatched away from her hands, Momoi didn't have time to react and could only freeze.

"Aomine-kun, that was mine."

"Ah, what, it's Tetsu's. I've drunk it. Such a strange taste."

Looking at the surprised Kuroko, Aomine handed over the empty bottle to show to him.

Not a drop was left.

Aomine carelessly scratched his head.

"I saw Satsuki holding it, so I thought that it was hers... Mn? Satsuki?"

He finally looked at Momoi's expression and saw that something was amiss.

Momoi puffed up her cheeks and tearfully stared at Aomine. When their line of sight met, Momoi finally burst out impatiently.

"Aomine you idiot! You all brawns but no brains simple-minded idiot!!"

"Ah? S-Simple minded!?"

"Hmph, I'm not going to care about you!"

Aomine was confused at Momoi's sudden outburst of rage.⁵

"Wh-What is it. Are you that thirsty? Want me to buy you a bottle?"

"Hmph, I'm not going to care!"

After that, Momoi turned around and strode away.

"H-Hey, don't go! Satsuki!?"

Aomine hurriedly called after her, but Momoi didn't look back, walked round the corner and left.

"Even if it was a bit, I really was looking forward to it."

Momoi angrily reached the vending machine at the corridor. There was no one around, and up ahead was only a stairwell.

She purchased a bottle of iced tea from the vending machine. Angrily, she downed half a bottle in one go.

"Aomine-kun really can't take a hint!"⁶

"What? Argued with your boyfriend?"

A voice asked from behind. Momoi turned around.

There were two guys who seemed to be high school students. Their baggy pants were hanging at the waist, and their shirts was unbuttoned. Out of the two of them, the one with long hair faced Momoi while laughing, giving a somewhat bad feeling.

⁵ to be more precise, he sweatdropped

⁶ wuu a bit unsure with the translations here again

"After arguing with your boyfriend, you came here to vent your anger and drink? To let such a cute girl like you get hurt, that boyfriend of yours is really too much."

"...Do you want something?"

Momoi stared at them cautiously. Her previous anger due to Aomine has gone, and instead held priority to how to deal with the current situation. Momoi's previous experience has told her that these kind of people who would simply come up to chat with you are generally not good people.

The guy next to the long-haired person, who had a nose piercing, casually went to the other side near the end of the corridor, resulting in Momoi being unable to go back to the hall or to the stairwell.

"You should let us comfort you. Want to go karaoke? Of course we'll treat you."

The long-haired guy grabbed Momoi's arm.

Don't simply touch me!

Momoi was filled with anger. However, if she were to become irrational due to anger at this time, she would only be laughed off by them. Momoi quickly flung off the long-haired guy's hand and coldly said:

"Please don't be like this. Someone's waiting for me. I'm leaving first."

"Hey hey, don't say that. Seeing your uniform, you're from Teikou Junior School? As a junior school student, you're quite cute~"

The guy with the nose piercing raised a hand to hook around Momoi, as though to embrace her.

Momoi tried to dodge backwards, but was blocked by the vending machine and could not escape.

No!

She drew back her body.

However, that guy's arm did not touch Momoi's shoulder.

"Momoi-san... probably does not know you, right?"

The nose ring guy's hand was grabbed by someone.⁷

"B-Bastard, who are you!"

The nose ring guy turned around, and the one standing there was-

⁷ ...I'm just going to call them 'nose ring guy' and 'long-haired guy', kays?

"Tetsu-kun!"

Momoi called out to him in relief.

It wasn't certain when Kuroko started standing behind the nose ring guy. Kuroko let go of his hand.

"Bastard, when did you..."

The nose ring guy rubbed his arm while giving Kuroko a strange look. This was no surprise, as he didn't notice at all that there was someone standing next to him.

At that next moment.

"Ah!"

The long-haired guy gave a shout in shock as he fell to the ground.

Once on the ground, Aomine's impatient face was revealed.

"What are you doing, Satsuki."

"Aomine-kun!"

Momoi called his name in surprise.

"If you want to drink juice, I said I'll treat you."

"Bastard, what do you think you're doing!"

The long-haired guy suddenly stood up and glared at Aomine.

"What I'm doing? ...Kicking behind your knees."

"You still dare to mention it, bastard, do you want to die!?"

"Of course not. I'm looking for her, but you're in my way, so I had to move you aside a bit."

"What did you say! You brat!"

The long-haired guy grabbed Aomine's collar. This probably sparked the nose ring guy to stretch out a hand towards Kuroko.

"You junior school brats dare to be brave!"

Kuroko took a step back, causing the nose ring guy to follow him and take a step forward.

"Hn?"

The nose ring guy suddenly found that he somehow could not move forward. Also, his forehead seemed a little weird. What was it? He strained to look upwards, but no matter

how much force he used, his head would not budge. Then he realized that someone was pressing down on his head.

"What are you three doing? Who is he? Someone you know?"

Dragged out words came from above the nose ring guy's head.

"Y-Y-You!?"

Looking backwards, the long-haired guy was shocked beyond words. This was also not surprising. The one holding onto the nose ring guy's head, as though he was holding a ball, was a giant who was more than 2 meters tall, which was Murasakibara.

"Hey, bastard, let me go!"

The nose ring guy grabbed onto Murasakibara's hand in order to free his head, but Murasakibara didn't budge at all. Also, from the nose ring guy's point of view, he could not see Murasakibara, causing him to panic.

"P-Please, let me go!"

"Ahhh, I don't want to~"

Murasakibara said as he yawned.

"Why don't you squash his head, Murasakibara."

Aomine looked at Murasakibara from the corner of his eye while smiling mischievously like a devil.

That threat was actually baseless, but the long-haired guy who was clutching onto Aomine's collar couldn't help but let go.

"Mnnnn... Then I'll listen to you and squish him."

Murasakibara squinted at the nose ring guy. His tone was so childlike, it made it unclear as to whether he was serious or merely joking.

"D-Don't!"

The nose ring guy pleaded. The long-haired guy, wanting to go and help the nose ring guy, went to grab onto his hand. At this point-

"...Or nevermind~"

Murasakibara suddenly released his hand, causing the freed nose ring guy to lose his balance when he was suddenly pulled by the long-haired guy, causing both of them to fall.

"Ow..."

"Hey, let's go."

"D-Damn, I'll remember this!"

The two high school students quickly got up, threw a few words at them before hurriedly escaping.

"What's with them?"

Murasakibara scratched his head, still not understanding what had happened.

Momoi gave a deep sigh, as though letting out all the tension from earlier.

"...What a relief..."

"What relief. What were you doing."

Aomine impatiently flicked Momoi's forehead.

"B-But I-"

Momoi was about to retort, but halfway stopped, and instead said "sorry".

Even though she planned to find an opportunity to escape or shout for help, if Kuroko and the others did not come, it wouldn't be easy for her to be saved. Also, they had been worried for her and looked for her, which made her happy. This was especially towards Kuroko, who was the first one who helped her.

"Thank you for saving me."

"It's a good thing you did not get injured."

Kuroko replied with a smile.

"We weren't here to save you. It's that guy who simply came here on his own."⁸

After Aomine finished speaking, he turned around to leave.

"Muk-kun, thank you too."

Hearing Momoi's words, Murasakibara silently smiled.

"Nn? Why are you thanking me?"

When they returned to the arcade, Midorima and Kise were already waiting there. Kise was showing Midorima a stack of photo booth pictures. It was unclear when those pictures were taken.

Kise gave a wry smile to the surprised Momoi and said:

⁸ [ugh my translation for the second half of the dialogue is a little shaky](#)

"When I went to get the prize for the DDR, I was stopped by a group of girls who said they saw me on a magazine. After that, they asked me whether I could take a picture with them. I didn't think much of it and agreed, but it went out of hand and we took batches after batches. I was just showing Midorimacchi the pictures that were just taken."

"It's such a mess you can't see clearly who is who."

Midorima bluntly gave his opinion.

"Girls like to decorate the pictures with different kind of stamps, isn't it, Momocchi."

"Mn, because it's cuter that way."

Momoi carefully looked through each piece. After a few pieces, she suddenly stopped.

"Ki-chan, this background's pretty rare. They actually have a basketball hoop."

"Ah? Oh, that piece. Yeah, that piece is rare. Usually it'll be some scenic background... Ah, that's right. Since it's such a rare occasion, why don't everyone take a picture together?"

"Ah!?"

"What?"

"Haih..."

"What are you planning?"

"Kise-kun, this is a good idea."

Everyone had different reactions to that proposal.

"It's because we rarely get to hang out leisurely like this. Also, one of us has never taken a photo booth picture before."

"I've never taken one before."

Kuroko admitted honestly.

"Really? Then let's go!"

Momoi was suddenly interested.

Thinking about it, the chances to take a picture with Kuroko is low. Even though this is a picture with everyone, but how can such an opportunity be missed.

"I don't need one."

"What do you mean by that. It's just a one time thing. If Momocchi wasn't here, then us as guys won't be able to experience taking a photo booth picture."

Kise persuaded non-stop, but Aomine still felt that it was troublesome and refused to agree. Hence, Momoi used her killer technique.

"Aomine-kun, didn't you just borrow my notes to copy. Consider this as a repayment."

"What!? If you say it like that... Ah, I get it! I'll just take it!"

The killer technique was very effective, and Aomine surrendered.

"If that's the case, then I too can't not take."

Midorima acted indifferently while hiding behind his bangs.⁹

"Ehhhh, everyone's taking? Then I'll also join..."

Finally, Murasakibara also joined in, and all of them headed to the photo booth machine.

Even though the machine was the latest model, but after the group of tall people entered into the machine, they had to squeeze and crouch inside the small cubicle.

"So cramped... How can girls tolerate being in such a narrow place..."

Aomine lifelessly sat on the ladder at the back.

"I see, the backgrounds are projected onto the screen."

Midorima looked around with interest.

"....."

Murasakibara wasn't interested, but quietly ate his snacks.

"Okay, it's done! It's going to take now~"

Momoi, who had been busy operating the machine, told everyone to get ready.

"Alright everyone, smile~"

After the audio instructions from the machine finished, there was a click of the shutter. The screen in front of them displayed the picture that was just taken.

"How can you take such a picture!"

Kise, who had went forward to inspect the picture, shouted.

"Aominecchi, why is your head tilted away from the camera!?"

"Because it's more interesting."

⁹ unclear with the second half, but the 'acting indifferently' part is certain

Aomine answered with a serious face. Momoi turned around to Midorima who was at the back.

"Midorin, you too, smile when taking a picture!"

"This is the only expression that I use when I take pictures."

"That expression is for taking passport photos. Also you, Muk-kun, why are you covering your face with that bag of snacks?"

"Mnnnnnn, because I want to take a picture together with the snacks."

"Then just put the bag up till your chest."

"Okay, we're taking another one!"

Momoi operated the machine again to take another picture.

"Alright, smile~"

After that, the shutter sounded.

"...Mm, this is not bad."

Looking at the displayed picture, Kise looked for Momoi's opinion.

There were two differences between the first and second picture. Firstly, Aomine, even though he was forced to, was looking at the camera. Secondly, Murasakibara had put the bag of snacks next to his face.

Momoi stared at the photo:

"Mn... It's okay. This picture's not that bad."

She gave a wry smile and held out her hand to press the confirmation button.

"Wait."

Midorima stopped her.

"What is it, Midorimacchi. Want another shot?"

Midorima pointed at the picture and said:

"Aren't we forgetting a very important thing?"

"Very important thing?"

Momoi and Kise looked at the picture again.

In front are Momoi and Kise with bright smiles, and then at the back was Midorima, Aomine and Murasakibara.

"Midorimacchi, did you want everyone to pose together?"

"No! Do you still not get it? Kuroko's not inside."

"Ah!!"

Kise and Momoi shouted as they looked at the display screen.

"Kurokocchi!?"

Kise hurriedly opened the cubicle's curtain, but there was no one outside.

"I'm here."

"Ah!?"

The voice came from behind Murasakibara.

"Eh?"

Murasakibara moved to the side a little, resulting in Kuroko appearing behind him.

"Kurokocchi! How did you end up there!?"

"It was Murasakibara-kun who sat in front of me."

"Mm? Ah, is that so?"

Murasakibara responded without a hint of apology.

"That's true. If you look carefully, I think you can make out Tetsu's shoulder."

Aomine squinted at the screen while looking for traces of Kuroko.

"Tetsu-kun, come here! Come to the front!"

Momoi called Kuroko in front between herself and Kise. She made it seem as though she did not mind letting him stand beside herself.

"Right! At the front's more obvious!"

Hearing Kise chiming in to help, Momoi shouted internally 'good job!'.

"Ah, that's right. Hold on to this. It'll make you more eye-catching! It's the prize which I won."

That said, Kise took out a fortune cat piggy bank from his bag.

Tetsu-kun holding a fortune cat, good job, Ki-chan! Momoi shouted internally again.

With that, she happily operated the machine again.

"Okay, we're taking now~ Are you guys ready?"

"Wait!!"

Midorima stopped her again.

He looked at Kuroko very seriously and said:

"Kuroko... What is that which you are holding!?"

"Taro Kitty?"¹⁰

"Taro Kitty!?"

"It's the name I just gave it. It's the fortune cat."

Kuroko continued: "Do you want to see it?" He stretched his hands to give it to Midorima.

Midorima accepted Taro Kitty the fortune cat, and stared at it from top to bottom. When the fortune cat was about to burst into flames from his fiery staring, he finally said:

"Kuroko, give this to me!!"

"Ah? Sure."

"What!"

Kise and Momoi could not help but jump.

"Midorin, what's wrong? Are you collecting kitty products!?"

"Firstly, that cat's mine! Secondly, kitties definitely don't suit you, Midorimacchi."

"Don't say such rude things so casually, Kise."

Midorima glared straight at Kise.

"I don't have a hobby of collecting kitty products. However, this fortune cat is special."

"Could it be, this is your lucky item for today?"

Hearing Kuroko's question, Midorima nodded: "Yes."

"Today during the morning horoscope announcement, it said that for Cancers, their lucky item is a fortune cat. I searched my entire house but could not find a fortune cat, so I didn't bring a lucky item today."

"That's true, today Midorimacchi's hands were empty."

Kise placed his right fist under his jaw while recalling.

¹⁰ googled the name again LOL it's 猫咪太郎, and 猫咪 means kitty. google translated 太郎 to taro

“Tetsu-kun’s really amazing to realize that Midorin didn’t bring a lucky item today.”

Momoi was really impressed, but Kuroko plainly answered:

“It’s because my interest is to observe people.”

Since it was a lucky item, there was no choice. Kise gave Taro Kitty to Midorima, who upon receiving his lucky item was revitalized like a duck in water.

“I was expecting to stop by an antique shop on the way home today... Never thought that I’d be able to get this in such a place!!”

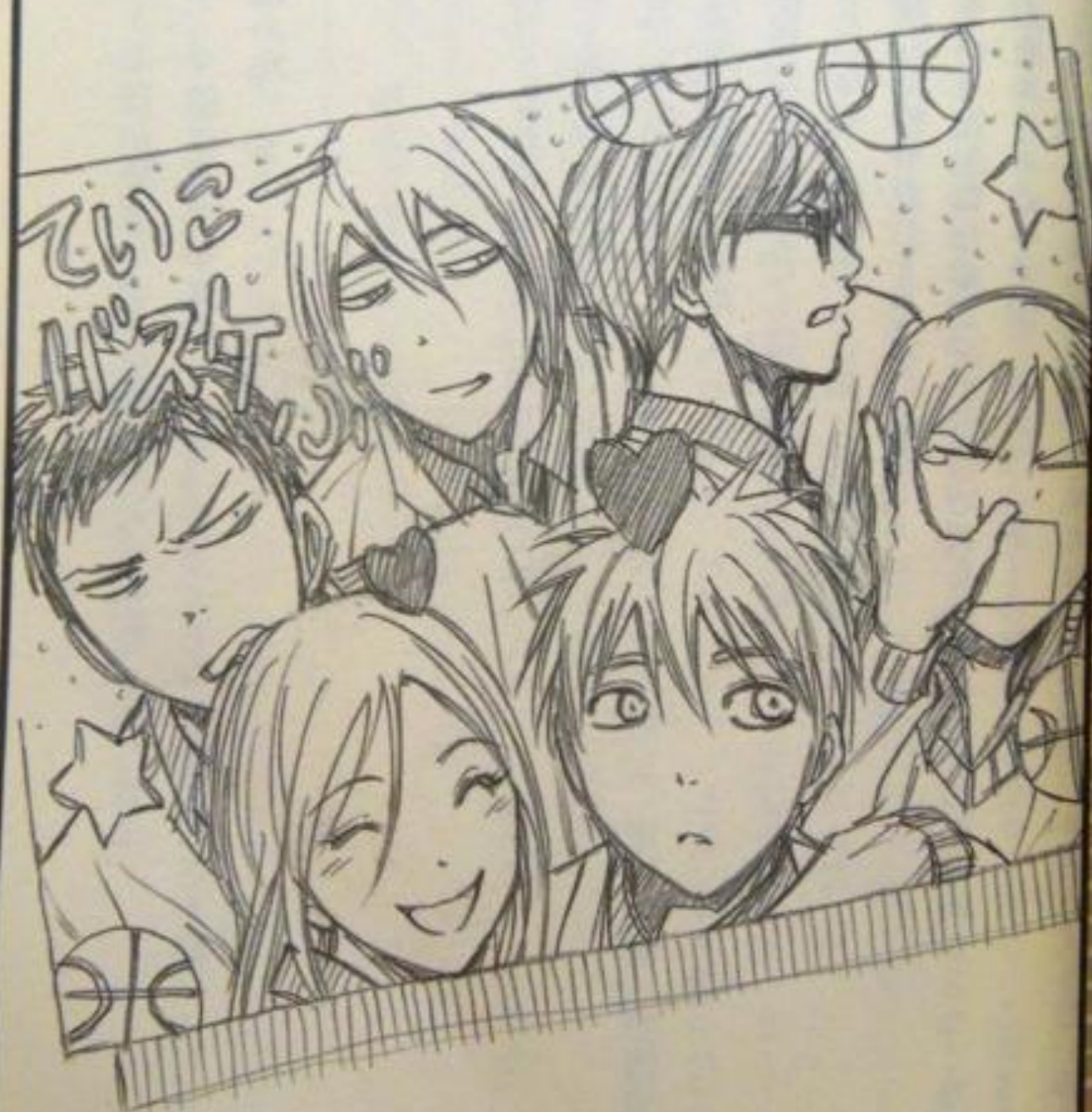
“Isn’t that great, Midorin.”

“Alright alright, let’s quickly take a picture for remembrance!”

Kise impatiently operated the machine.

After the shutter clicked, the display showed the preview picture.

It was unclear whether Midorima was shy, but he only showed his face from the side. However, in Momoi’s opinion, the expression on his face was definitely one of happiness.



PART 6

Momoi and Kuroko went home together while looking at the picture that was just taken.

They had split with the other four at the arcade, who went on their own way.

Aomine was the one who mentioned first: "Since I've finished copying, I'll go first." Midorima added: "I also want to go home to revise." Murasakibara said: "Then alright, bye bye~" and left. Only Kise said: "There's another girl who said that she wants to take a picture with me..." and remained in the arcade. Thus, everyone went on their own way home.

For Momoi, the long awaited time alone had finally begun.

However, for most people, when they arrive at such a moment they would usually not know what to talk about. Momoi was no exception to this.

She felt that she should first start the conversation with an unimportant topic, but she couldn't think of one.

While she was at her wits' end, Kuroko's house was getting nearer. If this continues, the both of them would have walked the entire journey home in silence.

It's so rare to be able to walk home with him. It would be a waste to end the journey with a casual goodbye.

That said, why did Akashi-kun want me to go home together with Tetsu-kun?

Momoi did not understand the most basic issue at hand.

When Murasakibara was passing the message to her, because she was too surprised, she did not think about it carefully. Even if Akashi saw through her, he wouldn't purposefully arrange for her to go home with Kuroko for her sake.

Also, why did he emphasize at the end: 'don't let Kuroko run about'.

Momoi racked her brains while walking. After a while, she suddenly stopped.

She looked to her right, then her left, then to her right again. No mistake.

"...Tetsu-kun is missing!"

She did not realize at all when was it that she became alone. As expected of Tetsu-kun... Momoi thought as she went back to where she came from.

She couldn't understand Akashi's thoughts. However, since he had asked her go home with Kuroko, then there must be something in mind. That was why, only for today, she must not let Kuroko go missing.

Where did he go? Momoi ran while thinking of places which Kuroko might be at. Suddenly, it came to mind.

The place which Tetsu-kun would go to would only be there.

Momoi ran to the destination without hesitating.

She arrived at a park, not too far off from where she realized that Kuroko was missing. It was a big place with lots of fitness equipment and resting areas.

The sun was starting to set. Momoi ran about while looking for any signs of Kuroko, not letting up even the slightest clue. Finally, she found him.

"Tetsu-kun!"

"Eh? Momoi-san?"

Hearing his name being called, Kuroko turned around and watched in surprise as Momoi ran over.

"You actually could find this place."

It was unclear as to whether he was feeling guilty for suddenly disappearing, but Kuroko sheepishly scratched his check.

"Of course! This park has a basketball court."

Momoi ran in front of Kuroko and took deep breaths.

When she was guessing where Kuroko could have gone to, the first place which she thought of was somewhere that was related to basketball. Following that train of thought, then it can only be this park as it had a basketball court.

"Really, you gave me a scare when you suddenly disappeared."

Hearing Momoi's reproachful tone, Kuroko obediently bowed in apology: "Sorry."

"I thought that if I told you that I wanted to come here, you would definitely oppose it."

"If you don't tell me the reason, then I have no reason to oppose."

Although she could already guess Kuroko's reason to want to come here, Momoi still went ahead and asked.

"It's because..."

Kuroko cast his eyes downwards, as though uncertain as to whether to say it or not. Then, he turned around slightly to look at the basketball court around ten meters away.

He turned back to Momoi, and looked at her as though wanting to get her approval.

"I want to play basketball for a while..."

"No!"

He was immediately rejected.

"No matter what, I can't?"

"You can't!"

Momoi placed her hands on her hips and rejected his request again.

"Tetsu-kun, you already know it very clearly why Akashi-kun wanted you to only observe by the sidelines today."

Kuroko's shoulders gave a small tremble at Momoi's words. At this point-

Clink.

The children had all gone home already, and only Momoi and Kuroko should be left in the park, but there was a strange sound of a metal object getting knocked into.

On reflex, the both of them turned towards the direction of the sound, which came from the basketball court behind Kuroko.

The sound from earlier should be something hitting the metal fencing surrounding the basketball court. Momoi deduced, while a familiar voice came from the court.

"I already said that we're only borrowing it to play."

The voice came from the middle of the basketball court.

The voice somehow gave a bad impression, and the way it was spoken didn't sound nice.

While Momoi was hesitating, Kuroko had already taken big steps towards the court.

"Eh, Tetsu-kun!?"

Momoi hurriedly followed.

When the two of them got closer, they saw that there were five high school students fooling around. Also, two of them seemed familiar.

They were the guy with the long hair and the guy with the nose piercing from the arcade.

However, they were not the only familiar ones. The skinny junior school student backed up against the metal fencing, surrounded by them, was also someone familiar.

"That kid..."

Momoi gasped. She rethought about it and was then certain. That kid was a first year student from Teikou Junior School's basketball club. Because he was a second string, Momoi did not speak to him much, but she could still remember him.

The kid timidly looked at the group of high school students and desperately pleaded:

"Um, p-please return the ball. It's very important to me..."

The first year student reached out to take the ball back from the long-haired guy, but the long-haired guy suddenly lifted the ball above his head. The small first year had no way to reach it.

The high school students laughed.

"That's why we said, after we get tired of playing we'll return it to you. We're specialists at basketball and haven't played for a long while, so we want to play a few rounds now! Understand?"¹¹

In other words, they aren't playing basketball at all!

Momoi stared at the long-haired guy who was showing off by spinning the ball on the tip of his finger. Even though she really wanted to rush onto the court and scold them, but there were five of them. Against a stronger enemy, hastily jumping in would only be dangerous.

"Please don't be like this. That ball is his."

Yes, that's right, that's what should be said... Wait, eh!? Momoi looked over in confusion.

It wasn't clear when, but Kuroko was already standing in the middle of the court.

"If you wanted to play basketball, then you should have prepared the ball on your own. Please return the ball to him."

"T-Tetsu-kun!?"

After shouting his name, Momoi belatedly covered her mouth, but it was already too late.

"...You two are from earlier!"

The long-haired guy and the guy with the nose piercing realized the both of them.

The guy with the nose piercing angrily spat out his chewing gum. Momoi noticed the change in Kuroko's expression when he saw this act. It seemed that the guy with the nose piercing was adding fuel to the fire.

"This is a place to play basketball. Please throw your chewing gum in the bin."

¹¹ actually I'm not sure how to translate 特招生, but you can get the definition [here](#)

Hearing Kuroko expressionlessly saying such words, the high school students burst into laughter.

“Hey, did you hear that? He asked us to throw the gum into the bin! That’s hilarious!”

“If he doesn’t like it, why don’t he pick it up himself. Hn?”

“Could it be that you also play basketball? And then you felt passionately that the court is a place that can’t be defiled? This is killing me!”

“What’s there to laugh about!”

With a snapping sound, Momoi also entered the court. Hearing them say such things, her earlier worry about danger was pushed aside.

“If you like basketball, then of course you will take care of the court!”

The high school students instead started blowing wolf whistles at the sight of a furious Momoi.

“Oh, really, you’re such a cutie, you don’t look like a junior school student at all.”

“I’ve heard that Teikou Junior School girls are all good looking, seems that it’s true.”

“You both actually abandoned such a great beauty and escaped, aren’t you guys idiots.”

The high school students totally ignored Momoi, but instead joked with the guys with the long hair and with the nose piercing.

Seeing them acting so casually, Momoi, who was starting to calm down, felt a trace of fear.

“Hey, did you hear!? Return the ball to him!”

To get rid of the nagging fear, Momoi shouted, but the other five still maintained their casual composure. Among the five of them, one of the guys who dyed his hair brown even said laughingly:

“How about this. We’ll compete in a game of your favourite basketball. If you guys win, we’ll return the ball and leave. However, if we win, you and the ball are ours. Okay?”

When the brown-haired guy said ‘you’, he pointed towards Momoi.

“W-What!”

Momoi saw red in embarrassment and anger.

No matter what, the five of them were still experienced athletes. On their own side, they only have a beginner in basketball, a player whose skills are too unique, and an ordinary

team manager. Even without knowing these inside information, it was obvious as to who would win and who would lose.

The opponents had purposely set such an unfair playing ground. Also, they even used her as a prize.

Momoi wanted to retort, but was too angry to speak. At this moment, Kuroko said:

“I understand. Let’s have a match.”

“Tetsu-kun!?”

Kuroko’s unexpected statement made Momoi suspect that she had heard him wrongly.

Stopping Momoi, who wanted to speak, Kuroko continued:

“However, if we win, you must apologize to Momoi-san.”

Kuroko said clearly. Seeing him like this, Momoi stared with wide eyes, forgetting to breathe. However, right now was not the time to admire him. Momoi came back to her senses.¹²

Following behind Kuroko, who was running lightly to one end of the court, Momoi tried to persuade:

“Tetsu-kun! You can’t do this, you absolutely can’t have this match!”

At the end of the court, Kuroko took off his jacket and said:

“But I can’t allow them to talk about you like that.”

“E-Even so, you can’t do this!”

Kuroko’s words made her so happy that her words faltered for a moment, but in the end Momoi still asked the question that was bothering her a lot:

“I’m worried for your injury! Tetsu-kun, you sprained your right hand, right?”

Kuroko stiffened.

Momoi worriedly looked at his right wrist.

“Even if you were to hide it, it’s no use. I noticed it in an instance. Your right hand still has the marks from wearing a bandage. Also, today when you were picking up the ball, although you acted as though nothing happened, but you were carefully making sure that you don’t use too much strength on your right hand. How can I not notice?”

¹² I AM SORRY BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT 犯花痴 IS SO I SUBSTITUTED IT WITH 'ADMIRE' OTL when i googled it, it translated along the lines of 'extravagant fondness for flowers', but when i read the Chinese explanations, I think it's sort of like 'fangirling'?

“...I really didn't expect you to find out. Akashi-kun managed to notice because he saw me removing my bandages.”

Upon questioning, it turned out that Kuroko had sprained his right hand during physical education class. He thought that it was no big deal, and even planned to participate in training, but didn't expect to be noticed by Akashi.

Thus, in order to not let Kuroko's injury worsen, Akashi had him observe at the side. At the same time, he had guessed that with Kuroko's nature, he wouldn't be able to tolerate not playing, which is why he had Momoi send him home while specially stressing 'don't let Kuroko run about'.

After finding out Akashi's intentions, Momoi had more reason to not let Kuroko play. If he were to play a match now and worsen his injuries, then Akashi's efforts would have been in vain.

“Tetsu-kun...”

Momoi called him, but Kuroko stared at her and said:

“I'm sorry, Momoi-san... I really feel that he was too much. He treated Momoi-san as a prize... I can't sit aside and watch my friend get insulted.”

To let Momoi be more assured, Kuroko quietly laughed.

“I definitely won't lose.”

In his warm and gentle gaze, there was also unwavering conviction.

...Since he said it like this, I can no longer oppose.

Momoi decided to believe in Kuroko, and nodded.

The slightest chance of winning can't be disregarded. Momoi thought to herself. However, when the two opposing sides stood on the court, it was obvious that the possibility of winning was very small.

Standing in front of the three of them, were the five high school students.

“Hey! Isn't it three against three!?”

“What? Who said so?”

Hearing Momoi's question, the guy with the long-hair answered with an amused expression.

At this point, Momoi realized.

They didn't only want to win, but wanted to play around with them during the game.

“Alright, let’s start.”

The guy with the dyed hair chuckled. Not only him, but all the five of them had an expression of ridicule.

The guy with the dyed hair took the ball with one hand and bounced it.

“Alright, who’s going to tip-off? Judging by the height, it should be the cute babe, huh?”

He smiled lewdly at Momoi. He looked at her while bouncing the ball. However-

“Idiot, how can Satsuki do such a thing.”

From the side, a hand snatched the ball away.

“You!?”

The guy with the dyed hair looked around in surprise.

At the direction of the sunset, the one spinning the ball with his fingertips was-

“Aomine-kun!?”

Momoi shouted out in surprise and relief.

“You were the guy from earlier!”

The long-haired guy pointed at Aomine as he recalled.

“Why would you be... Could it be...”

The guy with the nose piercing nervously looked around. However, the giant who was about to squish his head, Murasakibara, was not around. Instead, there was a mild-looking guy who had a piercing on one ear as well as an elitist-looking guy standing behind Aomine.

Aomine said to the guy with the dyed hair:

“You guys seem to be playing something interesting. Let us join in. The three of us will play. Me, this single earring guy, and this sinister four-eyes.”

“Who are you calling ‘sinister four-eyes’!”

Midorima said angrily.

“Aominecchi, is that your image of us...”

Kise slumped his shoulders.

Aomine provokingly looked at the guy with dyed hair.

“We only have a few people here, but we’ll let you have that slight advantage. You dared to insult my partner, I’ll definitely return this favour to you!”

“Pft, hahahahahahaha! Junior school students have pretty big guts! Fine, I want to see what skills you guys have!”

The guy with dyed hair said as he laughed non-stop.

“Then with that, it’s agreed.”

After Aomine said that, the members on the court were changed.

“Alright, Tetsu, you too go to the side and watch.”

Aomine urged while looking at Kuroko, who was reluctant to leave.

“...Aomine-kun. I also want to join, can I?”

“No way.”

Aomine answered immediately.

“You... Do you know the reason why I came here?”

“...You’re here to pick up Momoi-san, right?”

“Of course not. I came here because I was worried about you.”

“Me?”

Kuroko looked at Aomine, slightly confused. Aomine continued:

“You... Even if Akashi were to prevent you from playing, you definitely won’t be able to endure not being able to play, which is why I guessed that you probably would be here. I didn’t expect that you would plan to have a match with those guys though.”

“I’m sorry...”

“What is this ‘sorry’ for? Is it to not have a match with them anymore? Or is it because you know that you are injured, but still want to play?”

“...If I say it’s the first one, would you be angry?”

“I will beat you up to death.”

“...Then it’s the latter.”

“Good boy.”¹³

“But I still want to join in the match.”

“...You... Did you listen to what I just said?”

Aomine impatiently flicked Kuroko's forehead, but Kuroko nodded his head and said:

“Of course I heard. That is why I won't use my right hand. I will only use my left hand to play against them. If everyone is here, then only my left hand is enough.”

Hearing Kuroko's words, Aomine couldn't help but smile from the bottom of his heart.

“Then let's play a match against them.”

“Mn.”

Kuroko stretched out his left fist, and gently bumped onto Aomine's right fist.

¹³ *sob* my fangirl heart... um the word is 乖, which is a way to praise a kid that s/he is obedient and basically a well-behaved kid, so I translated it to 'good boy'



PART 7

The progress of the match was one-sided.

Aomine's flexible playing style. Midorima's long distance shots. Kise's offence that rendered the opponents powerless. Also, Kuroko's misdirection, allowing him to disappear in the blink of an eye.

The high school students didn't even get to score a single point. Even if they managed to get the ball, it would be snatched away in a few seconds. The result was a disastrous loss.

Leaving behind the group of high school students, who were unable to speak upon being utterly defeated by the overwhelming difference in strength, Momoi and the others left the park.

Even though Kuroko wanted the high school students to apologize, but Momoi said "I don't want to look at these guys' faces for even a second" and refused their apologies.

The first year student, who managed to get his ball back, was deeply moved after being able to witness a match played by the future titled Generation of Miracles. Before he left, he repeatedly said: "Thank you senpai!"

In order to send Kuroko home, the five of them also started their journey.

While walking, Momoi asked Midorima and Kise the question she had in mind:

"Were you both like Aomine and came here because you were worried about Tetsu-kun?"

"No, I came because I had something to give you."

After that, Midorima took out a box from his bag.

It was a slender box, with the words 'Yushima Tenjin' printed on it.¹⁴

Midorima handed the box to Momoi.

"This is a repayment as thanks for letting me copy your notes. It's my final secret weapon for exams, the specially made rolling pencil."

"Rolling pencil!?"

Stunned, Momoi reached out to take the box. Kise looked on curiously.

"If it's specially made, that means it's handmade by Midorimacchi!?"

"This is what's meant by doing what one can do."

¹⁴ googled it again. it's 汤岛天神

Midorima suddenly gave a smug smile. Kise reached over to wave his hand in front of his face and said:

“Really, although the way you said it seemed to be cool, but you’re actually not cool at all.”

“Ah, there’re three pencils. Tetsu-kun, I’ll give one to you.”

Momoi said to Kuroko after looking through the things inside the box.

“Ah, is this okay?”

“It’s alright.”

Momoi smiled to Kuroko.

“Tetsu-kun’s wrist is sprained, so it’ll definitely be inconvenient during exams, right? Consider this as me cheering you on.”

“Then I’ll accept it.”

Accepting the pencil from Momoi, Kuroko stared at it.

Even though she said it was to cheer him on, it was only half truth and half excuse. The excuse part was to be able to give him a present as a remembrance for today.

After being able to go home together, Momoi finally understood one thing.

Tetsu-kun is really cool!

Momoi determined it again and again.

In order to protect a friend’s dignity, even if it was a malicious match, he would not hesitate to agree to play. This kind of people was now very rare.

Also, such a person, how can he not be liked.

Momoi’s heart was filled with sweet thoughts of love.

While Midorima was telling Kuroko and Aomine about the legend behind the rolling pencil, Momoi and Kise followed behind them.

“Then, why did Ki-chan go to the park?”

“You want to know?”

Kise started grinning.

“If you’re willing to tell, then I want to know.”

“Then if I tell you... Momocchi also have to explain truthfully.”

“Nn? Explain?”

As though wanting to whisper, Kise went close to Momoi’s ear, put his hand to his lips and said in a small voice:

“I was curious as to whether there would be any development between you and Kurokocchi after you both went home together. Was there any?”

“Ah!?”

Momoi looked at Kise in shock.

Kise gave her a wink.

“Haih, I actually thought that the one Momocchi likes was Aominecchi, but it seems that you also like Kurokocchi a lot. Who do you actually like?”

Unexpectedly, Kise saw through her... Momoi widened her eyes.

This is probably a case of the bystander being able to view the situation better than those involved.

Somehow it seemed to become very interesting. Momoi started to laugh.

Seeing Momoi’s reaction, Kise pouted.

“Haih, what are you laughing about. Tell me, tell me, I’ve already told you, so Momocchi also has to let me know too.”

“Oh, should I say it or not.”

“Eh? With such a reaction, that means something really happened?”

Kise accurately deduced.

“Hehe, then I’ll only tell you. There was indeed some progress.”

Momoi said with a smile.

“Eh? Whaaaaaaaat!? Really!?”

Kise shouted in surprise. Hearing it, Aomine turned around and asked:

“Hey, what are you both doing?”

“Nothing, absolutely can’t tell Aominecchi!”

“Ah? What’s that suppose to mean!?”

“Because... Momocchi, we can’t tell, right?”

Momoi only looked at him smilingly and purposely changed the subject.

“Haih... Akashi-kun even said to not run around, in the end we were outside for so long.”

Momoi purposely complained, resulting in Kuroko to embarrassedly scratch his cheek.

“Then, today’s events need to be kept secret from Akashi-kun.”

“These events!?”

Kise suddenly blurted.

“Truth to be told, that guy would definitely be able to see through.”

Even Midorima agreed with Aomine’s words.

“Anyway, Murasakibara would definitely tell Akashi the truth.”

“Mn? What is it about me?”

“Ah!”

Aomine got a big shock when Murasakibara suddenly appeared in front of them.

“Murasakibara-kun, didn’t you go home?”

Kuroko, who was the least frightened, asked.

“Mnnnnn, I was planning to go home, but because I couldn’t forget the taste of the chilli oil tomato flavoured cracker sticks, so I came to look for a place which sold it. In the end I managed to buy it at the third convenience store, so I wanted to give Kuro-chin a few to try.”

Murasakibara took out a plastic bag of cracker sticks.

“Thank you.”

Kuroko accepted it.

“That’s right, Murasakibara-kun. Can you keep today’s events a secret from Akashi-kun?”

“Mn? Why?”

Murasakibara was puzzled.

“If he knew that we went to the arcade in order to win the snacks, he would definitely be angry.”

“If that’s the case, then okay. I also don’t want to get scolded by Aka-chin.”

Murasakibara immediately agreed. Momoi and Kise couldn't help but applaud while sighing in relief that Kuroko was good at persuading.

“Then, today's events will be a secret between the six of us.”

“Is it so, a secret...”

These sweet sounding words made Momoi overjoyed.

Kuroko gave a warm smile and said to Momoi:

“Even though we couldn't keep the promise to Akashi... But I really was happy today.”

Such warm yet fragile smile would be forever imprinted in Momoi's heart.



A few months later.

Each of them welcomed a new change within them.

It started with the sudden blossoming of Aomine's talent-

The thing that once held them together tightly, started to silently fall apart.

The 2nd G:

Kaijou High School's White Book of Youth ~Summer Vacation's Still Not Over Yet~

Accompanied by a loud noise, the basketball that has been chased for the past forty minutes fell into the basket, shaking the net.

At the same time, the whistle signalling the end of the competition sounded.

98 to 110.

The competition in the hot summer had ended.

However, their summer had yet to end.



Do you know what the three key elements of summer vacation are?

The sudden question made Kise stop while he was reaching out to take his uniform from his clothes locker.

"...Three key elements? What do you mean? Is it a riddle?"

Kise asked the one who posed the first question, Moriyama Yoshitaka.

It was Kaijou High School's male basketball club's changing room.

A week has passed since Kaijou's match against Touou in the quarterfinals of the Interhigh championship. After the match, the Teikou basketball club composed their emotions and restarted their daily training. No matter whether they won or lost, time was equal to all. In order to win in the next match, they could only work harder in their training.

After finishing the day's hard training and showering, Kise was about to change his clothes when he heard the aforementioned question.

Kise was waiting for Moriyama's answer, but didn't expect the other person to start gracefully spraying deodorant onto himself while refusing to speak.

"Hey hey, Moriyama-senpai? Don't stop the riddle halfway."

"It's not a riddle. It's a principle of the world."

After spraying the deodorant, Moriyama answered while flipping his newly dried hair. Kise was confused.

"Principle? The three key elements of summer vacation?"

"That's right. The three key elements that exist to enrich the summer vacation. They are 'fireworks', 'yukata' and 'test of courage'."

"....."

In the end, what Moriyama wanted to say was this. Kise had nothing to say. However, Moriyama ignored Kise, and continued:

"However, these three key elements have a very important prerequisite. Do you know what it is?"

"No, I don't..."

Even though Kise really wanted to continue saying 'know what you're talking about at all', but the basketball club places great importance in the relationship between those of different seniority, he could not completely refute his senior's words.

"The prerequisite to the three key elements of summer that can not be left out is... cute girls!"

Moriyama seemed to be very confident with this fact. Although his voice was not loud, but it seemed to resound.

"If we don't enhance this summer vacation, then our summer will not end. Right, Kise."

"...Probably so."

He somehow felt that this matter would not develop well. Kise hurriedly put on his clothes.

However, when he had put on his white shirt and was just about to button it, he was abruptly grabbed on the arm.

Kise got a shock, and turned to look at the one who grabbed his arm- second year's Hayakawa Mitsushiro.

Hayakawa had a serious expression and stuffed something into Kise's hand.

"W-What is this?"

Kise stared at the object in his hand.

What Hayakawa had handed him was a spray can. On the can, there was a label saying 'Deodorant (Citrus Scented)'.

"According to my online research, girls will not hate guys that have a citrus scent."

Moriyama said confidently while looking at the confused Kise. A faint scent of soap as well as citrus could be smelled from Moriyama. It seemed that the deodorant that he had used earlier was the one in his hand. No, not only Moriyama, even Hayakawa had the smell of citrus.

(What is going on!?)

Having himself surrounded by two guys that were suddenly obsessed with citrus scent, Kise could only remain speechless.

Hayakawa suddenly grabbed Kise's hand that was not holding the spray, and raised it as high as he could.

"Oi, Hayakawa-senpai!?"

"Anyway! Just sp(r)ay some fi(r)st!"¹⁵

"What!? What are you saying! Anyway, senpai, can you please not pronounce only some words, it's like you're talking in codes!"

"Be a bit tactfu(l)! Do you sti(l)(l) not unde(r)stand this!"

"I don't understand at all!"

Seeing that Kise was fighting desperately to resist, Moriyama hardened his heart for Kise's sake and shook his head, took the spray can from earlier and sprayed it onto Kise's back.

"Ahhhhh! Hey, w-what are you doing!? Nn? How did it become like this!?"

"In other words, we're going to pick some girls up!"

Kise instantly gaped with wide eyes.



After the sun set, a few tall boys were gathered at the school's entrance.

Needless to say, as you would have already guessed, they were the regulars of Kaijou High School's basketball club.

Seeing that everyone was present, Moriyama nodded in satisfaction, and said smilingly:

"Alright, then let's go pick up girls right now!"

"Hey, wait a minute!"

¹⁵ finally decided to use this way instead of swapping the 'L's and 'R's

"What is it, Kasamatsu?"

Moriyama, who was just about to take a step forward, placed his foot down and turned around to look at Kasamatsu Yukio.

"Why do I have to accompany you all to do such things!"

He stared at Moriyama discontentedly.

The scent of citrus could also be faintly smelled from him.

Like Kise, he was also ambushed with the citrus scented deodorant. Unlike Kise, he was called to the school's entrance without even knowing the reason why until he was told so earlier.

Kasamatsu stared at Moriyama, his face plainly saying 'I'm in a bad mood'. Moriyama replied with a natural expression:

"Because the internet said, when picking up girls, the success rate is higher when there are more people."

"Really, you guys!"

Kasamatsu was about to protest further, but was interrupted by Hayakawa's enthusiastic voice:

"Yeah! Mo(r)iyama-senpai, I wi(l)(l) do my best!"

"Mm, you need to show a bit of restraint."

"Mo(r)iyama-senpai, what do you mean!? I'm being ve(r)y se(r)ious."

"Hey, listen to me!"

The irritable Kasamatsu was ready to great them a few times with the usual iron fist, but his hand was gently held onto.

"Alright, calm down a bit. Occasionally going out to play isn't a bad idea."

"Kobori..."

The most rational of the regulars, Kobori, let go of Kasamatsu's hand, and gave a wry smile:

"Also, if Hayakawa goes out of hand, then it'll be easier to control him if you were around."

"This is...!"

As expected of the most sensible person of the team. Because what Kobori said did indeed make a lot of sense, Kasamatsu could only reluctantly agree to join in the 'picking up girls' group.

Kise took the opportunity to mention as well "Um, can I go home now?" and ended up receiving a piercing glare from Kasamatsu, as though saying "You want to escape on your own? No chance at all!!" and in the end Kise could only give in, "...Nevermind, take it as though I didn't say anything."

Thus, the group started to leave for the station.

According to Moriyama's online research, the place in front of the station was a sacred ground for picking up girls.

Although it was already evening, but the scorching heat of summer was still present.

While fanning his collar to cool down, Kise spoke to Kobori, who was walking next to him.

"I never thought that Kobori-senpai would be interested in such things too."

"It can't be considered as being interested..."

Kobori looked at Kasamatsu and the others who were walking in front of them.

Kasamatsu was repeatedly insisting to Moriyama and Hayakawa: "I didn't want to come along! I'm here only to accompany you all!"

Kobori smiled, and said in a way that only Kise would be able to hear:

"Although the excuse was to enhance the summer and go pick up girls together, but I think that this is probably Moriyama worrying about Kasamatsu and coming up with this idea."

"Ah? Worry?"

Kobori nodded. Kasamatsu and the others did not notice the two people behind them chatting at all.

"The match against Touou was only a week ago, but Kasamatsu had already got himself over it and is getting ready for the Winter Cup."

"Such strong will power. I really admire him."

"...Moriyama is worried as to whether he is forcing himself."

"What?"

"Kasamatsu knows very well why he was selected as captain. He also understands how as a captain, he would affect the people around him, which is why he put his feelings aside while desperately wanting to perform his duties. However, if he overexerts himself, there will be

a day when he would lose it. In order to not let him be too pressured, an occasional rest is needed.”

“I see...”

Kise turned to look at the three people walking in front.

Kasamatsu was still repeatedly insisting to Moriyama and Hayakawa.

Kise originally was not interested in the group wanting to pick up girls, but after knowing that it's in order to let Kasamatsu relax, he no longer opposed to the idea.

(Passing a day like this during the summer vacation, isn't such a bad idea.)

Kise started to secretly look forward to it.



The group finally reached the sacred place Moriyama was talking about: the place in front of the station.

As expected of the sacred ground, there was a lot of people coming and leaving the place, and a lot of them were girls around the same age as Kise and the others.

“...Then, how do we do it?”

Kasamatsu asked Moriyama somewhat nervously.

Moriyama narrowed his slender eyes and said:

“Just watch.”

Seeing how confident Moriyama was, everyone gave a 'wow~' in admiration.

Hayakawa looked at Moriyama with shining eyes:

“Mo(r)iyama-senpai! How much expe(r)ience do you have in picking up gi(r)(l)s!?”

“Only once.”

Moriyama fiddled with his fringe while giving a faint smile.

“Once?”

Kise, Kasamatsu and Kobori froze.

“That time- Did you succeed?”

“That unexpected encounter regretfully ended...”

Hearing Kise's question, Moriyama looked into the distance while reminiscing.

"I will never forget that moment my entire life. It was one week ago... After the match, I went to talk to the girl at the west side, third row, first seat."

"One week ago? Isn't that during our match against Touou!? You rascal, what were you doing after the match!"

Kasamatsu started scolding agitatedly. Moriyama, unfazed, continued:

"Our encounter was only for a moment. Although I talked to her, but we didn't chat, and just like that she left from my side."

"Say, all you did was said something to her and she didn't want to respond to you at all."

Kise calmly analyzed. Moriyama, still unfazed, continued his story:

"At that moment I thought, I can't just sit idly and wait for the next encounter to come. I must learn how to pick up girls on my own... That's right, picking up girls is a bright road that is to be travelled! Since then, I started researching at night the ways of picking up girls, and then thoroughly mastered it! Today is a good opportunity to practice the truth!"

"Then you go on your own!"

Standing beside the raging Kasamatsu, Kise remained speechless.

(Kobori-senpai, y-you're really a great guy! Moriyama-senpai definitely called everyone out because he wanted to pick girls up!)

Kobori was Moriyama-senpai's bait.

After being scolded by Kasamatsu, Moriyama gave a look of disappointment and said: "If you try picking girls up once, then you will realize its beauty." After that, he instructed:

"Anyway, Kobori, you go first."



Not betraying Kise's expectations, Kobori suffered a crushing defeat.

They were cheering for Kobori while hiding at the back, sitting side by side on the rail surrounding the fountain. When Kobori escaped red faced in panic and embarrassment, they greeted him warmly.

"Kobo(r)i-senpai, I was g(r)eat(l)y inspi(r)ed! So that's the way to pick up gi(r)(l)s!"

Hayakawa seemed to be deeply moved, and excitedly said to Kobori.

Hearing such an unclear encouragement from Hayakawa, Kobori, who originally thought that picking up girls was very troublesome, could no longer receive anymore blows. He quickly went to the fountain's fence and sat down:

"Someone dig a hole for me to bury myself..."

Clutching his bowed head, his voice trembled slightly from embarrassment.

"K-Kobori, are you okay?"

Hearing Kasamatsu, Kobori shook his head.

"Kobori-senpai... That's right, did you feel that you could have succeeded just now?"

Hearing Kise's words, Kobori froze momentarily.

After a while of silence, he said in a low voice:

"...No. But because I was thinking that in order to cheer Kasamatsu up, I...!"

"Aren't you too honest!? That said, didn't you hear what Moriyama-senpai said earlier!? Anyway, nowadays even in drama shows you won't see a pickup line like 'Miss, do you want to have a cup of tea?', what kind of pickup line is that!?"

"...I only know this line!!"

Kobori clutched his head.

"After I said that, the girl just burst out laughing... Why are girls so cruel..."

"The cruel one is Moriyama-senpai."

"No, no, the cruel one is this world that can not understand the pureness of this young athlete."

Moriyama calmly responded while giving Hayakawa's shoulder a pat.

"Hayakawa, next is your turn."

"Unde(r)stood! I'm going now!"

For some reason, Hayakawa saluted, and left the fountain.





"Impossible!"

"So fast!!"

After one minute, Hayakawa returned energetically despite suffering a disastrous defeat.

"After I talked to them, they escaped with a surprised expression!"

"What nonsense! After hearing someone suddenly say 'Are you able to come and watch my next match? Please come and cheer for me!' anyone would run away!!"

Kise blurted out. Kasamatsu continued:

"Also, why would you want to look for the girl which just rejected Kobori."

"Because I am in charge of rebounds!"

"That has nothing to do with this!"

Hearing Kasamatsu's roars, Moriyama patted his shoulder with a look of satisfaction.

"Now do you know the joys of picking up girls?"

"Are you blind!?"

Moriyama shook his head at Kasamatsu's refutes and said:

"It seems that you still don't realize... Alright, this time it's my turn."

"You should have gone from the start!"

"Haih, don't say that, Kasamatsu. Watch carefully. I will definitely succeed, and let you understand the true meaning of the three key elements of summer vacation."

After that, Moriyama briskly left the fountain.

"Moriyama-senpai, good luck! I will definitely leave!"

Hayakawa cheered loudly at Moriyama's back as he left. Kise, who was standing next to him, asked Kasamatsu:

"I've noticed this before, but although Moriyama-senpai can't be compared to me, he's also considered good-looking. Why doesn't he have a girlfriend?"

"Are you casually trying to show off?"

Squish, Kasamatsu stepped on Kise's foot.

“Wuu!! I’m sorry...”

Kise apologized while suppressing the pain. Kasamatsu then said:

“There’s a reason as to why Moriyama doesn’t have a girlfriend. It is also where his other name originated from.”

“Ah? What other name?”

“You will understand after watching.”

Kasamatsu put his line of sight onto Moriyama, the latter who was at the moment picking up a girl.



After a few minutes, Kise finally understood what Kasamatsu had meant.

Returning to the fountain alone, Moriyama bowed his head in thought.

“How strange... It was clear that midway the atmosphere was still very good. Could it be that there really is no way for a guy and a girl to communicate?”

“The one who can’t communicate is you, Moriyama-senpai! What were you doing just now!”

Moriyama responded calmly after Kise blurted.

“That was my pickup technique originating from my own personal habits and countermeasures. First praise the other party like she’s a flower, so that she would lower her guard.”

“Mn, your praises can really take someone’s breath away. To be able to praise someone you just met until such an extent... Moriyama, you are really a good person.”

Kobori nodded while giving a deep sigh.

“Kobori-senpai, just how good a person do you think Moriyama-senpai is!? You’ve been tricked! You’ve definitely been tricked! How can you not think about how outrageous Moriyama-senpai’s last few words were!”

Hearing Kise’s complaints, Moriyama shrugged somewhat confusedly.

“Where was I being outrageous? I only said ‘this meeting must be predestined by fate’, didn’t I?”

"You didn't stop there! 'This is the fate that we are unable to control. I feel that if I were to let your hand go now, I will never be able to meet you again. This is a fateful encounter. I will never let you go.' Didn't you also say that!?"

"What's wrong with that?"

"You still ask what's wrong with that! Are you doing marketing! All you did was scare that girl!"¹⁶

"Really? How strange. I saw from the internet that girls are weak towards 'encounters predestined by fate'..."

"Just how much do you trust the internet!?"

Kise blurted, then gave a big, tired sigh.

Kasamatsu patted his shoulder and comforted Kise, saying:

"Now you can at least understand. Moriyama is the type of person who would walk down a dark path until the end. Once he believes in something, he would implement it until the end. That's why he was given the name 'Pitiful Handsome Guy'.

"It's really pitiful..."

Kise slumped his shoulders helplessly.

After 'Pitiful Handsome Guy', the 'picking up girls' gang had gone through three battles and three defeats. Their winning percentage was at zero percent.

"We should win at least one round."

Moriyama looked at Kise and Kasamatsu who were sitting on the fountain's fence.

"I-I won't go! I came here to supervise you, not in order to pick up girls at all!!"

Kasamatsu hurriedly shook his head while waving his hands in opposition.

Kise, who was sitting next to him, raised his hand and said:

"I think that... Even if we don't pick up girls, I can organize a joint party. Would that be okay? During the match against Touou, Moriyama-senpai also said that..."

"You can't do that."

Moriyama immediately rejected.

"That time, it was said that if we won then you will have to introduce them to me. You need to differentiate it properly whether we won or we lost.

¹⁶ [Translation's a bit shaky here](#)

“Differentiate it properly...”

Hearing him, Kise had nothing else to say.

Moriyama nodded his head to himself and said:

“So now we’ll depend on you. You have to bring victory to the team. I’ll be watching you.”



Carrying the weight of the entire team’s expectations, Kise left the fountain.

There were a lot of girls walking in front of him. All of them were secretly looking at Kise and walking in front of him.

Aside from playing basketball, Kise was also a model. That is why prior to this, it was always the girls who came up to him first, so this was the first time in his life for him to take the initiative instead.

(How did they come up to me last time?)

His memories were unclear. This was as even though they came up to him, he would always simply find a reason to reject them.

(...No, the important thing isn’t how to pick them up, but who.)

Moriyama’s words were to spot and target someone before attacking. Praises that were too common would be useless.

The problem was who to pick.

Kise looked at the people at the area, and noticed something was a bit odd.

(Somehow... Since earlier, the group of people walking in front of me are the same?)

To confirm his suspicions, Kise started to make a mark. At this moment, a pair of girls walked in front of Kise, and one of them was wearing a pink hairpin, making her very easy to remember.

In order to not let Kise notice, the girls were stealing glances at him.

After they walked pass Kise and reached one end of the place, they followed the border of the area and turned back-

“Really...”

“Don’t you think that sometimes, opportunities will just come to you, Kise.”

In the end, seeing how delighted Moriyama was because of the situation, Kise had no choice but to smile.

By the way, the girls had already left their seats.

After everyone had ordered the drinks buffet, the girls said ‘Please excuse us...’ and then all of them went to the washroom. They were probably fixing their makeup for the upcoming socializing.¹⁸

While drinking his iced tea, Kise casually looked at Kasamatsu and ended up spraying out the drink in his mouth.

“S-Senpai!?”

“W-...W-W-W-What is it?”

It was as though you could almost hear the sound of creaking when Kasamatsu turned to look at Kise, his whole body was stiff in his seat.

“I should be the one asking you ‘what is it!’ Are you okay!?”

“N-Nothing to be mentioned...”

Kasamatsu was like a robot running out of oil, and stiffly lifted the glass of iced coffee. However, because his hands were trembling too strongly, the coffee and ice cubes were splashing out.

“Oi, eh? No way!? Senpai, calm down! Cup! Put the cup down! Let me wipe it up!”

Kise hurriedly took a wet towel to wipe the table while Hayakawa picked up the ice, somehow using the wet towel to wrap it up.

“Senpai, what is it with you?”

The one who answered Kise was Kobori.

“Kasamatsu has never spoken to a girl before.”

Kasamatsu hung his head. Or perhaps he was actually merely wanting to nod his head in agreement.

“Never spoken with one before? ...But, aren’t there a lot of opportunities to talk to those girls who are in the same class?”

¹⁸ I don't know what a drinks buffet is, but that's what it's translated into...

“As much as I found out from him, since he started school until now, he has only spoken these two words ‘Nn’ and ‘No’ to girls.”

“Wouldn’t that be considered as having spoken with them?”

“However, that’s practically not saying much. That’s why, suddenly having him talk to girls, he’ll become extremely nervous.”

“Senpai... I’m a(l)ready on the ve(r)ge of c(r)ying.”

Hearing Kobori’s explanation, the straightforward Hayakawa had already started tearing.

It is probably this that made Kasamatsu unable to stand it any longer. He immediately hit Hayakawa on the head.

“I-I’m not scared of such a small matter! I’m also a man... Today I’ll definitely t-... t-talk to them nicely!”

Kasamatsu, who could at least speak normally now, was completely red. However, even though he said such words, but it was very obvious that he was merely putting on a brave act.

He took a deep breath and said a soft ‘come on’!

It was very vigorous.

It is because it was too vigorous, the ones at the side watching started to be uneasy.

“Then, Kasamatsu, which girl do you like?”

The number one most nervous person, Kasamatsu, heard the number two most nervous person, Moriyama, ask.

“That, it’s... The rightmost one...”

For some reason, Kasamatsu became embarrassed again, bowed his head and said shyly. However, Moriyama managed to hear him.

“Rightmost? ...Ah, that very well-developed girl. I see, Kasamatsu you like big boobs.”

“Big...!? Oi, can you not say it like that!”

“But you can’t distort the truth. More importantly, since there’s the type which you like, you must chat with her nicely.”

If it was the usual time, Kasamatsu would definitely retort with a ‘Like I need you to tell me.’, but today he kept faltering. After thinking for a while, he called for Kise.

“Kise...”

“What is it?”

Kasamatsu looked across the table at the place where the girls would be sitting when they came back, and asked:

“W-When talking to girls, w-... what is a good topic?”

“What... Very normal topics.”

“What is ‘very normal’!?”

“Do you not know even this!? Mn, let me think, such as... Yeah! Just like Moriyama-senpai, just praise the other party that she’s cute or something like that! Also, during appropriate times, say something interesting!”

“Praise... Something interesting?”

Kasamatsu’s mind started spinning in high speed.

“Sorry, we’ve let you guys waited for a long while. ☆”

The girls came back from the washroom at this moment.

(T-These girls are also fully prepared...!)

Kise widened his eyes when he saw the girls that came back.

Delicately drawn eyeliner. Thick fake lashes. Curled long hair. Shimmery lipgloss applied on the lips. Also, pretending to expose them unintentionally, the boobs.

Compared to before they entered the washroom, the level had gone up.

“Ah, everyone has already taken their drinks! We’ll also go and get ours.”

The girls chattered as they went to the place to get their drinks.

However, Kasamatsu did not pay attention to them.

His mind was only filled with these words.

(Praise. Make them laugh. Praise. Make them laugh. Praise. Make them laugh...)

Finally, the girls returned to their seats with their drinks, and proposed ‘Then let’s make a toast!’.

“Who shall we let to shout kanpai?”¹⁹

¹⁹ ‘kanpai’ means ‘cheers’

The girl sitting opposite Kise was sending him fiery hot looks. However, the one receiving it was someone who belonged in a club that placed importance in the ranks. Kise did not hesitate to look at Kasamatsu:

“Then let’s let Kasamatsu-senpai do it...”

After he said it, Kise suddenly had a bad feeling, but it was already too late.

Kasamatsu gripped the cup.

However, this time, the hand holding the cup was not trembling.

Kise, who was worried that he would panic, calmed down upon seeing this.

(As expected of senpai. During the critical moments, he is really reliable!)

Kise looked at Kasamatsu with complete trust and confidence.

However, in fact, Kasamatsu was so nervous that he can no longer tremble.

His mind could only endlessly resound those few words.

(Praise. Make them laugh. Praise. Make them laugh. Praise. Make them laugh...)

He stood up, looking at the girls in front of him for the first time.

The girls, who were around his age, were smiling at him.

(Praise. Make them laugh. Praise. Make them laugh. Praise. Make them laugh...)

Kasamatsu gripped the cup tighter.

(Praise. Make them laugh. Praise. Make them laugh. Praise. Praise...)

While standing, what Kasamatsu could see, were the girls’ open-

(Make them laugh!)

He raised his cup and loudly said:

“T-Then let’s... Oppai!!”²⁰

The last syllable cracked a little.

However, no one dared to tell him that.

With that, the irrecoverable summer encounter began, and the irrecoverable summer farewell also happened.

Just like that, they welcomed the end of another day of their summer.

THE BASKETBALL WCH

誠凛高校

SEIRIN High School

火神大我
KAGAMI TAYGA

相田リコ
AIDA RIKO

伊月優

木吉鉄平
KIYOSHI TERUHI

日向順平
HYUGA JUNPEI

黒子テツヤ
KUROKO TETSUYA

小堀
KOBORI

早川充洋
HAYAKAWA MITSUMURO

黄瀬涼太
KISE RYOTA

海常高校

KAIJO High School

笠松幸男
KASAMATSU YUKIO

海常
5
森山由孝
MORIYAMA YOSHITAKA

黄瀬涼
KISE RYO

「キセキの世代」の
一でモデルもこ
「黒子」の

紫原
MURASAKI

「キセキの世代」
ター。バスに
スナック菓子

桃井さ
MOMOI SA

黒子のことが
マナーデー
じみても

STORY

黒子たちの「過去」が今、動き出す!! 超強豪・帝光中バスケット部には「キセキの世代」と呼ばれる5人の天才と、彼らが一目置く「幻の6人目」黒子テツヤがいた。
この小説は彼らがまだ、袂を分かť以前、中学時代の物語である——。
さらに、本編では語られなかった誠凛高校、夏の山合宿の様相や、黄瀬たち海常高校が主役のエピソードなども収録。もう一つの「黒子のバスケ」、ここに解禁!!

The 3rd G:

Seirin High School Basketball Club's Biggest Crisis?

[T/N: kays so, for Izuki's puns, it's romaji (hiragana/katakana/kanji /english)

...ok that seemed a bit unclear, but when you reach that part you'll get what I mean orz]

Regarding this person, Kiyoshi Teppei, Hyuuga Junpei had once commented about him as such:

"A weirdo."

Everything he did had a sense of oddness. That was Kiyoshi Teppei.

It was when Kiyoshi returned to the Seirin basketball club, one of the days of the new semester.

Kiyoshi, who for the first time ever appeared only when training was about to start, began rummaging for something in his locker the moment he came in.

Hyuuga, who happened to be in the clubroom at the same time, didn't care at the slightest at what was happening.

No matter what, he was a 'weirdo'. To be surprised by everything he did would be exhausting.

Leaving Kiyoshi to be at his wit's end, Hyuuga quickly changed into his T-shirt for practice and prepared to leave. At this moment:

"Hyuuga, wait."

Kiyoshi called for him.

He looked at Hyuuga with a serious expression.

However, according to experience, this serious expression would definitely be followed by something jaw-dropping. Because of that, Hyuuga was already tired of it- It's really annoying. Can this guy not act this way.

"What is it?"

Kiyoshi still had the serious expression.

"I think I lost my wallet."

"...I see. Then don't tell me go to the student council and submit a missing item report and also I will not lend you any money!"

"Hyuuga you're amazing! You said all that in one breath!"

"I need to use such speed when talking to you, otherwise I'd be wasting my time. Alright, I'm going first."

"Wait, this matter is related to you."

"Ah?"

Hyuuga, having just stepped out of the door, turned back. He was skeptical.

"What does your wallet have to do with me."

"My wallet has money inside."

"Don't talk rubbish."

"It's not my money."

"What do you mean. If it's not your money, then whose?"

"It's the club's funds."

"Club's? Ah, the club's funds... Eh?"

When Hyuuga finally registered the meaning of the words, he froze.

(Hey, wait a minute. Did this guy just say something very important...)

The bad premonition Hyuuga was having made him start to sweat.

Usually, such premonition would mean that something very terrible would happen.

"Yesterday, the school gave each club their funds for the semester. Riko said 'You take it first', and passed all the money to me. Then I put it inside my wallet..."

"Did you lose it!?"

Hyuuga interrupted Kiyoshi and hurriedly asked.

"Nn, probably."

Kiyoshi answered seriously. Hyuuga took the towel in his hand and threw it in his face. Before Kiyoshi could dodge it, he could hear Hyuuga's thundering roars.

"Still a 'probably'! What is it!! What did you do!!"

"I lost my wallet."

"I didn't need you to answer!! Without the funds, replacing the basketballs, the orders of the uniforms, all these can't be done!"

"That really is so."

"That really is so, really you're an idiot! You still can be calm! Argh, send all the members to search! I don't care if you have to dig three feet under the school, just find it!!"

"Please wait a moment."

"We can't wait! Eh, ahhhhhh!!"

Hyuuga shouted in shock while retreating backwards.

There was supposedly only the two of them in the room, but suddenly there was a third voice.

"I heard what you both said. I have an idea."

The third person in the room- Kuroko Tetsuya. Today his sense of presence was very low, so no one noticed him.

"Kuroko, when were you here!?"

Hyuuga put his hand over his chest in order to calm his racing heart.

"I was here all along..."

Kuroko scratched his cheek.

"You said you have an idea? What idea?"

Kiyoshi merely raised an eyebrow at Kuroko's sudden appearance, and asked.

"Kiyoshi-senpai losing the wallet. At a time like this, there's an order when looking for something. First go and check whether someone has already found the wallet and sent it to the student council. After that, go through all the places which Kiyoshi-senpai has gone to today. I think with that, it will be found."

"...Kuroko, did you eat something wrong today."

Hearing Kuroko saying so much was rare, and Hyuuga was a bit surprised and reached over to his forehead to test his temperature.

"I am usually like this."

Kuroko remained his expressionless face while dodging Hyuuga's hand.

Kiyoshi rested his right arm on his left hand, and placed his right hand under his chin. After silently thinking for a while, he nodded and looked at Kuroko.

"Indeed, following what he said would be better. Kuroko, you're amazing, just like a detective."

"I often read detective novels."

"Really!? Then say that phrase which detectives always say."

"What?"

Kuroko tilted his head in confusion. "It's that one." Kiyoshi said and turned towards Hyuuga:

"The criminal is... you!"

"Who are you talking about! You this idiot!!"

Seeing Kiyoshi aggressively pointing a finger at him, Hyuuga immediately threw a basketball shoe at his head.

"Don't joke around at a time like this! Anyway, just follow Kuroko's idea and search for it!"

Hearing Hyuuga's orders, the temporary detective and the guy with a shoeprint both nodded.



The first step of searching: Going to the student council to make inquiries turned out to be a fruitless end.

"Kiyoshi's wallet isn't there. Anyway, the person from the student council said, no one picked up any wallet yesterday or today."

Returning to the gymnasium from the student council room, Koganei Shinji cheerfully reported. Hyuuga and the others were waiting at the gymnasium.

"...Then, the wallet searching activity shall enter the second phase."

Kuroko lowered his head to look at the records in his hands.

"What is this?"

Kagami Taiga popped in to look at the piece of paper containing the records. It contained a list of times and places.

"This is a record of what Kiyoshi-senpai did the entire day today. We need to follow this record and conduct the search."

"Follow... We need to search all of these!?"

"Yes."

Kuroko confirmed concisely. Kagami froze.

"Then let's first divide into a few groups. Splitting up to search would be faster."

Izuki Shun suggested. However, Hyuuga shook his head in opposition.

"No, everyone will search at the same place. Kiyoshi's actions are too weird, if there are too little people, it won't be found!"

"I still feel very normal."

Kiyoshi gave a goofy grin, not a trace of embarrassment was on his face.

Seeing his foolish expression, the other team members felt a slight shiver.

The person whom Hyuuga called a weirdo, Kiyoshi. If they had to trace his entire day's activities...

"...Then where do we go first?"

Koganei nervously asked Kuroko.

"First we go to the pond behind the classroom block."

"Pond? There's a pond there?"

Koganei exclaimed in surprise. Mitobe Rinnosuke, who was beside him, was also puzzled.

At the next moment, Izuki said with a bewildered expression:

“Ike ni ike!”²¹

The place behind the classroom block at Seirin High School. When the basketball club reached the place, they couldn’t help but exclaim about it.

“T-This is a pond...?”

“Can this be considered a pond...”

“...It should be considered a pond.”

Of course, it’s impossible for such a place to have a pond.

What was in front of them was around the size of a twenty five meter swimming pool- a paddy field.

However, even if it’s called a paddy field, what was inside it wasn’t rice, but instead water weed.

It was previously used by the gardening club, but after the gardening club disbanded, it wasn’t cared for by anyone. Now no one remembers this place any longer.

Ignoring the club members’ surprise, Kiyoshi went to the pond- no, the paddy field and crouched.

“If you guys look carefully, there are small fish in the water. Discovering them at such a place, and watching them working hard to survive, you’ll somehow want to come and cheer for them.”

“So every morning you’ll come here and feed them?”

“Mm, it’s very fun.”

“You idiot-!!”

In a fit of anger, Hyuuga gave his back a kick. Kiyoshi lost his balance and waved his arms around, as though he was swimming, in order to regain his balance, however-

Splash.

In the end he still fell into the paddy fields.

“W-What are you doing. Woah, all wet...”

²¹池に行け! / Let's go to the pond!

Kiyoshi used his hands to support himself in the water, and turned around to complain- but suddenly kept quiet.

“Really. How low can your sense of caution be! Carrying such a large sum of money, you can still come by the water to play!? Have you never considered what would happen if you were to slip and fall in!”

When Kiyoshi turned around, Hyuuga had already started complaining nonstop while removing his shoes and socks, and rolling up the elbow-length sleeves of his T-shirt.

“Hyuuga?”

Seeing Hyuuga’s strange actions, Kiyoshi widened his eyes.

“Alright, don’t just stand there, Kiyoshi! Go search in the water!”

With that, Hyuuga also entered the paddy field.

“I see... If there’s too little people, it really can’t be searched.”

Izuki smiled and also followed Hyuuga to search in the water barefooted. Seeing this, the other club members also went to search in the water. Hyuuga ordered the first years to search around the paddy field, and thus the hunt for the wallet began.

“Kiyoshi, does your wallet have any distinctive features?”

Tsuchida Satoshi asked as he parted some water weeds.

“Blue nylon wallet with Hanafuda patterns. Ah, the Buddha pendant that was bought during the junior school class trip is very eye-catching.”

Hearing Kiyoshi’s reply, Tsuchida answered “Okay, got it.” and started searching wordlessly.

Like this, everyone searched for about fifteen minutes while barefooted in the mud.

“Ah, this!”

Koganei suddenly shouted.

“Found it!?”

Everyone looked at him.

Koganei happily raised the object which he had found.

“This, how nostalgic! It’s those pencils that can be joined together!”

“Now is not the time to reminisceeeeeeee!!”

Hyuuga grabbed the pencil and threw it as hard as he could into the distance.

“My penciiiiiiiiill!”

Koganei wailed, and slumped his shoulders.

Kiyoshi comforted him:

“Right, don’t be sad. Don’t worry. The pencil that can be joined together can still be bought today.”

“Now is not the time to talk about such stuff, okay!!”

Hyuuga blurted right after.

At this point, Kuroko and the others who had been searching at the surrounding area came back.

“Senpai, it’s not at the surrounding area... We didn’t find anything similar to a wallet.”

“Did you find it in the pond?”

Hearing Kagami and Kuroko’s report, Hyuuga sighed and said:

“We also couldn’t find anything here. It was probably lost at some other place.”

Hyuuga and the rest came out from the paddy field, deciding to go to the next location.

The food store.

Remembering today’s date, all of the club members bit the sides of their mouth.²²

“Kiyoshi... During lunch break, did you come here to buy bread?”

Koganei asked with a stiff expression. Kiyoshi cheerfully answered:

“Because I haven’t eaten it for a long time, the black pig cutlet... so-and-so bread.”

“Why did you leave out the name of the bread!”

Hearing Koganei, Izuki said: “You’re focusing on the wrong thing.”

“W-With such a crowded environment, you actually dare... to hold the savings...”

Kagami also could not help but bite his cheeks.²³ They were the past witnesses, and have personally experienced the brutal battle for the bread. Never expected that Kiyoshi would actually dare to carry the savings and challenge that crowd...

²² uh you know this emoter :l

²³ the :l face

All of them were speechless for a while. The one who broke the silence was Kuroko's calm tone.

"It's possible that while squeezing around it got lost. Let's split up and find."

"But... With such a circumstance, it's possible that it has been stolen."

Kagami frankly gave his opinion. Everyone seemed to have thought of this possibility and looked at Kuroko, waiting for his opinion.

"Let's still remain optimistic."

"You're just comforting yourself!"

"Yes, yes, everyone let's be more accepting."

"You have no right to speak!"

Kiyoshi, as the cause of everything, was collectively shouted at.

"Do you actually know that all of this is because of you!? If it really was stolen at the food store, then it's a big problem, you know!?"

Hyuuga reprimanded. However, Kiyoshi patted his shoulders and comfortingly said: "Okay okay, calm down a bit."

"The possibility of it being stolen is very small. You can take it easy."

"What makes you so sure?"

Seeing Kiyoshi being so confident, Hyuuga asked with a frown.

"Of course I'm certain. Because I didn't even squeeze in."

"What!?"

"Even though I really wanted to eat the black pig cutlet so-and-so bread, but I suddenly remembered that I had a meeting with Riko."

"A meeting with Riko... Could it be...!"

"Yup. At the Home Economics classroom... I accompanied her for a tasting meeting."

"W-Whaaat?"

Everyone was shocked again.

"Accompanying her for a tasting meeting? Could it be that you ate it!?" This was Koganei.

Mitobe touched Kiyoshi's forehead, then he checked his pulse, wearing an expression as if saying: "Are you still alright?"

Everyone looked at him worriedly, but Kiyoshi still smiled goofily.

"I'm fine. Just that what was strange was after eating I had a period of time where I lost my memories, and then when I woke up I found myself in the Broadcasting room."

He casually dropped a shocking fact.

"Lost your memories!?"

"That said, how did you go to the Broadcasting room! Did you walk there while unconscious!?"

"From the Home Economics classroom to the Broadcasting room. It's possible that along the way the wallet got lost."

"Kuroko! At this time can you not be so calm!"

However, no matter how they talked about Kiyoshi's antics, the wallet would not appear on its own.

Still, they had to search for it.

The group patched up their almost shattered spirit, and began their search again.

First was the food store's surroundings. Next was the Home Economics classroom. Finally was the corridor from the classroom to the Broadcasting room. However, there's no need to even consider being able to find the wallet, they didn't even manage to find the slightest clue.

Finally, everyone went back to the place where Kiyoshi realized that he had lost the wallet.

"I was cleaning up here when I realized that the wallet was missing."

At the moment, no one even wanted to say a word.

"Aren't the brooms short? Bending over to sweep the floor is painful on the waist, then I straightened up to massage my waist and hit it a few times, and it was then when I realized that the wallet at my back pants pocket was missing. I really had a shock at that time!"

Kiyoshi's loud voice echoed at Seirin's school courtyard.

After lessons, Kiyoshi's class was in charge of cleaning up the courtyard.

"Why does it have to be the courtyard! This place is too big!"

Hyuuga lamented.

Although it's the school courtyard, but at the corners there was also an area where trees were planted.

Just thinking about looking for something here would make someone feel exhausted.

The basketball club members, having already thoroughly searched four other places, looked at the huge courtyard and thought of having to search in the dark. Before they even started to search, they already felt physically and mentally tired.

However, out of the group, only one of them went towards the grove.

It was Kuroko Tetsuya.

“Kuroko...”

Kagami called for him. Kuroko stared at the grove, and said:

“We can't give up.”

No matter how low the possibility was, they could not give up. This was his belief that he held onto strongly up to this day.

The originally slightly frustrated Kagami suddenly laughed.

“...Is this so, that's right.”

Kagami slapped his cheeks lightly with his hands, and pulled himself together to head to the grove.

Getting influenced by them, the other club members also gradually started to search at the grove and the courtyard.

“It feels like cleaning the courtyard is really endless.”

“Ah! Houki wo hoki shiro!²⁴ What a good phrase!”

“Alright, alright. Faster go and search.”

“The waist will really become sore.”

Watching the club members chat while searching at the same time, Kiyoshi seemed to be moved.²⁵ After that, he heard Hyuuga roar: “Don't slack off!”

However, after searching the courtyard they still could not find the wallet.

If they continued searching, they would have to delay their training. Hyuuga decided to return to the gymnasium first.

²⁴ ホウキを放棄しろ！ / Quickly put down the broom!

²⁵ direct translations are 'Kiyoshi seemed to see something dazzling', which probably can mean that he was moved until his eyes sparkled I guess orz

“Ahhhh, where could it have gone to?”

Koganei mumbled as he lay down on the floor with his arms and legs spread out, and rolled about.

“It could be that someone picked up the wallet today, and would only bring it to the student council tomorrow. Let’s be patient and wait.”

Tsuchida patted Kiyoshi on the back: “Isn’t that so.”

However, Kiyoshi shook his head.

“Nevermind. Let’s leave it like that. Let’s give up.”

“What!?”

The unexpected words made everyone freeze and look at Kiyoshi.

“Give up? ...Kiyoshi, are you being serious!?”

Tsuchida widened his eyes in surprise. Kiyoshi looked at him and gave a slight smile.

“Nn.”

“What do you mean by ‘nn’...” Tsuchida was speechless.

Kiyoshi looked at all the members’ faces, and said:

“The matter regarding the wallet will be disregarded. Thank you everyone, for helping me to search for it.”

The club members became restless. They looked at each other in confusion.

In order to comfort them, or perhaps in order to encourage them, Kiyoshi continued:

“I really did lose my wallet. However, today’s search had also allowed me to discover something.”

He paused for a while before continuing:

“The bonds between us are very strong! We will definitely be able to win the Winter Cup!”

“Is this the time to say such things you idiot!!”

Smack!

In a split second, Hyuuga smacked Kiyoshi on the head and stood aggressively in front of Kiyoshi, who was crouching over while clutching his head.

“Listen to me! No one here cares whether your wallet is lost or not! The issue is what’s inside the wallet! That is our club’s funds for the semester!”

“That’s right!”

Kiyoshi looked up in sudden realization.

“Did you just remember of it now!”

It was already the nth time Hyuuga shouted at him.

“Alright, alright.” Izuki comforted him, then said with a serious face:

“However, since the situation has become like this, we need to think about what to do if the wallet really can not be found. Can the few of us come up with the money.”

“We really need to think about it...”

Hyuuga sighed and said in a low voice.

“Arf!”

Suddenly there was a puppy’s barking inside the gymnasium.

Outside the door, the basketball club’s mascot, Tetsuya Nigou, was sitting there.

“Nigou... Ah.”

Kuroko seemed to have realized something. He ran towards Nigou and crouched next to it.

Then he turned around:

“This can’t be Kiyoshi-senpai’s wallet, can it?”

“Ah!!”

Kuroko was holding a blue wallet in his hand. On the zipper there was indeed a Buddha pendant hanging on it.

“Yes! It’s that one! It’s my wallet!”

“That’s great!! Was it Nigou who picked it up!?”

Koganei carried Nigou and spun around happily.

“Arf! Arf!”

“That’s great that’s great, thank you~~~”

He spun faster and faster.

However-

“None! There’s no money inside!?”

“What!?”

Hearing such a shocking statement from Hyuuga, Koganei lost his balance and fell onto the floor. In order to not squash Nigou, he succeeded in raising his hands up high.

Hyuuga, who had checked the wallet thoroughly, gulped.

“If it’s not in the wallet then it means...”

“I say, you guys! It’s already so late already, why haven’t you start today’s practice!?”

The one who came in was Aida Riko.

“Don’t think that the Winter Cup is still far off!”

Riko, who didn’t know what had went on, placed her hands on her hips and stared at them.

“R-Riko...”

Hyuuga was about to prepare himself to explain to her...

“Ah, that’s right. Teppei, is it alright to give this to you now? What I talked to you about yesterday, the semester’s club funds.”

“...Ah?”

“What do you mean by ‘ah’. Didn’t I tell you yesterday. I said tomorrow I’ll give you the semester’s club funds for you to take care of.”

“Ah, is that so?”

Kiyoshi turned around to face his companions that were especially trusted today, and silently gave a goofy smile.

“Sorry, I remembered wrongly.”

At that moment, other than Kiyoshi, everyone from Seirin’s basketball club was thinking of the same thing.

After that, needless to say, Kiyoshi received an attack of roars and fists from everyone.

The 4th G:

Kaijou High School's White Book of Youth ~Summer Vacation Can't be Allowed to End Like This~

Thirty first of August, the last day of the summer vacation.

After their training ended, Kaijou High School's basketball club's regular members collectively walked into a family restaurant.

Even after being led by the waiter to their seats, and while drinking their self-service drinks, no one dared to speak. All of them seemed to be very nervous.

"...This day has finally come."

The one who broke the silence was Kasamatsu Yukio.

"Finally it arrived..."

Kobori gulped.

"Kise, can you repeat who the other party is?"

Moriyama Yoshitaka, who was giving off the scent of citrus, casually fiddled his fringe as he asked.

"Ah, oh. Today the ones I invited are a model and her friends."

"Ohh..." The others sighed.

"Finally we're going to have a proper joint party...!"²⁶

Moriyama sighed deeply and passionately while casting his eyes downwards.

"Oh no! I'm sta(r)ting to get ne(r)vous!"

Hayakawa Mitsuhiro's eyes also started to burn with passion.

Seeing the club members being excited in their own way, Kise carefully observed.

The failed incident where they picked up girls and suddenly went out with them was still fresh in his memory.

That day, after stepping out of the restaurant, Moriyama said:

"We can't let the summer vacation end like this."

²⁶ About 'joint party', remember in G2, the word 联谊? yea it's that one

It meant that the summer vacation can't be allowed to end with such a crushing defeat.

Hearing his words, Kobori, Hayakawa and even Kasamatsu nodded.

Kise thought, where was there a crushing defeat, but did not say it out.

“One day, I will avenge this humiliation!”

Hayakawa declared with determination in his eyes.

What do you mean by 'avenge this humiliation', this is simply our one-sided defeatist mentality... After thinking about it, Kise still did not say it out.²⁷

Later, when he received the orders 'organize a joint party' outside the restaurant, he could only silently nod his head.

Just in case, Kise had purposely asked Moriyama: “Senpai, have you abandoned the principle of clearly distinguishing success and failure?” Moriyama answered: “To maximize the opportunities in front of you, only this is the correct way.” That means he had agreed.

For Kise, the words of the orders were not difficult.

However, even if he reorganized a new joint party, the result can be predicted.

The one who is known to be of good heart, Kobori; the sports enthusiastic who speaks continuously like quickfire, Hayakawa; the Pitiful Handsome Guy, Moriyama; and the one who has zero immunity towards girls, Kasamatsu.

Each one of them is worrying.

(Can this really work?)

Not knowing whether he had managed to read Kise's mind, Moriyama said:

“Don't worry, Kise. The past failure will not happen again.”

“Really? That... Can I trust you all?”

“Relax. During the period when you were organizing the joint party, it's not like we didn't do anything, right? Just like coming to the restaurant one hour in advance, there's a reason behind it.

Hearing Moriyama explain while full of confidence, Kise could at least calm down a little.

“As expected of senpai. This is indeed avenging the past humiliation!”

²⁷ sorry orz I don't know how to translate what Kise's thoughts were... but it's something like that...

“That’s right. The main reason for the past failure is that our experience with chatting with girls is too little. That is why we unanimously agreed that before the joint party we’re going to continuously practice in order to increase our experience in chatting.”

Kise nodded. Moriyama’s analysis indeed made sense.

“That’s why we plan to have some training... Kise, you be our coach then.”

“What!?”

Kise raised his voice and asked in surprise.

“W-W-What do you mean!? What do you mean be your coach!?”

“Because among us all, the one who speaks with girls the most is you. I hope you can check our speaking techniques.”

“What are you doing! Hey, don’t tell me that you all are only going to start practicing now!?”

“It can’t be helped. A large portion of our time every day is spent on playing basketball and sleeping.”

Kasamatsu, Kobori and Hayakawa nodded in agreement.

The final blow to the speechless Kise was Kasamatsu’s words.

“Kise, for Moriyama and the others’ sake, just help. Although I don’t have any interest in it at all, but since they have already said such, then just agree. Listen properly; I completely don’t have any interest!”

Kise really wanted to ask: Are you having a newbie’s pride? But after thinking about it, he held the question in.

The senpais’ requests can not be refused, this is the fundamental roots of the athletes.

Kise muttered “I got it...” and nodded.

“However, I have a condition. If I’m guiding you all, I will be very strict!”

Hearing his condition, everyone replied: “That would be most welcome.”

Kise’s training was extremely brutal.

No, or perhaps it should be said that the club members’ skills were way too low.

Kise would say something that a girl can probably say, and then let the others give an appropriate response to this sentence. However, that proved to be difficult.

“Moriyama-senpai, what if a girl says she wants to go to the amusement park?”

“Going to a place like an amusement park is too pointless. Just go to your house.”

“So sudden!? And why do you want to reject it completely!?”

“I read it online, it’s best to try and choose a location that is close by for the first date. When a close by location is mentioned, the first place in mind is your own house.”

“Don’t go online anymore! Go and forget everything which was said online! The other party already said that she wants to go to the amusement park, so just go along with it! Suddenly saying that you want to go to her house, you’re really difficult!”

“But without internet connection, I don’t know how to speak with a girl.”

“If you don’t even know this, then how can you still go and pick up girls!”

“I-It’s too difficult...”

Moriyama muttered as he looked into the distance.

The sight of the boys desperately practicing how to chat in order to be able to win the girls’ hearts had a certain surreal feeling to it.

However, no one gave up.

As expected of the ones who managed to stand out from the difficult training, and selected as regular members.

Patience and perseverance are both ensured.

As though he was moved by their enthusiasm, Kise also became increasingly focused on guiding them.

“Hayakawa-senpai, when you’re speaking, be more calm!”

“Ah!? I’m no(r)ma(l)(l)y (l)ike this! Fine, I’ll give it a t(r)y!!”

“Kobori senpai, your sense of presence is too low! Give out more of that ‘I am a good person’ aura!”

“It’s too difficult for me! W-Would this do!?”

“Too subtle!”

“Kise, what about me!?”

“Kasamatsu-senpai you just continue until you can look at the class photo directly! Especially the girls!”

“T-Too hard!!”

“Just how scared of girls are you!?”

The training continued, until they reached a problem.

There was no common topic to talk about.

Television shows, artists, the most current trends, all those topics which girls are more easily interested in, Kasamatsu and the others do not know them at all. After all, the entire day is spent on basketball, so it can't be helped that they don't know.

“We really have to find a topic.”

Kise folded his arms and pondered.

“A topic...”

Moriyama also folded his arms and nodded.

“A topic...”

Kobori nodded.

“Topic...”

Hayakawa clutched his head. At this moment,

“...Say, are you guys really thinking properly?”

Kise, as their coach, stared at them.

Out of the three of them, Kasamatsu couldn't help but sigh.

“However, the topic which we are more familiar with is only basketball.”

“...Indeed there is only this topic.”

Kise also sighed.

“Would girls be interested in basketball?”

Kobori asked Kise.

“Can't say. Probably depends on how you explain it to them... However it'll probably not work.”

Kise once again folded his arms while at his wits' end. After a while, he finally came up with an answer.

“In that case, then we'll try to ask them as many questions as possible for them to answer. Avoid mentioning the topic of basketball.”

However, to only ask questions and not answer any when meeting someone for the first time would result in it being impossible to have a good conversation.

Soon after the joint party began, the topic was already raised.

“I heard that all of you are friends from the same society. What society is it?”

The girl model gave a smile that was identical to one that was fit for a magazine, and asked Kasamatsu.

If it was other times, everyone would have already melted at such a smile. However, upon hearing the question, everyone immediately entered into panic mode.

After all, if the other party asks such a question, then they have no reason to not answer it.

The one who asked questions became the one who was asked a question...

Kasamatsu was very hesitant. But if the question wasn't answered, it'll seem very unnatural.

He decided.

“It's... Basketball.”

“Sports related. How cool!”

“Ah?”

Her unexpected reaction made Kasamatsu and the others immediately suspect that they had heard wrongly.

They even had thought that girls would not be interested in sports...

“What part of basketball do you think is attractive?”

Another girl asked Moriyama.

They've left a good impression on the girls...!

The boys saw a ray of hope. If they could talk about basketball, then they don't have to worry about not having a topic.

Moriyama said with a smile:

“The charm of basketball can only be felt and can't be expressed in words. If you want to know, it's better to go and watch a match.”

Then he looked at his own hand, as if remembering the feeling of having a ball in his hand.

“If you don’t watch a match you won’t understand the appeal of basketball. However, the most meaningful part would probably be the feeling of fighting alongside your partners.

“That’s right.”

Kasamatsu finally gave a natural smile.

“That’s (r)ight, the five against five match du(r)ing today’s t(r)aining! I (r)ea(l)(l)y had a shock! Mo(r)iyama-senpai’s passing the ba(l)(l) without (l)ooking. It’s (r)ea(l)(l)y too accu(r)ate! How was that even passed!?”

“I also had a shock. The timing was very accurate. When was it that you confirmed Kise’s location?”

Hearing Hayakawa’s words, Kobori also leaned across to ask. Moriyama said: “Drawing it out on paper is easier to understand.” Then from his sports bag he took out a pen and paper, and drew a simple diagram of the court and started to explain.

After that it got out of hand.

From the impression of today’s five against five, to the formation of both sides, then to the training methods, and finally even about the muscle stretching exercises that are done at home. Once basketball is mentioned, then there are so many things to talk about. The five of them exchanged their opinions until they lost track of time, even when the ice cream sundae ordered by the girls melted they didn’t notice.

Moreover, they had forgotten about the people that should have not been forgotten.

“...Everyone really likes basketball, huh.”

“Nn! What to do, I really want to go to the court now to practice this formation.”

“That’s right.”

Hearing what Kise said, the other members also expressed a strong approval.

At the next moment, they finally came to their senses.

The boys raised their heads. The table was fully covered with sheets of paper with training methods and formations on them.

In front of them, totally opposite with the boys who could barely contain their excitement, were the five girls who didn’t have the slightest hint of a smile on their faces.

“Ah... About that, sorry...”

Even the highly experienced Kise could only know how to apologize now.

“It’s okay. Don’t need to mind.”

The girl models replied with a false smile.

“You all just... go play on your own.”

The colder than ice voice easily extinguished the boys’ enthusiasm for the summer.

Thus on that day, their summer ended.



第5 G
恐怖!
山合宿の悲劇!!



The 5th G:

Terror! The Tragedy at the Mountain Resort!!

Go out of the room, walk through the dark corridor, and go down the stairs.

Just like that, everything will end.

Kagami Taiga clutched the torchlight and clenched his teeth tight. Outside the window was a completely dark night. There was no moonlight. Even if there was, along the windowless corridor, the only thing that can be relied on is the torchlight in his hand.

"Kuroko, let's go...!"

Calling for his partner, Kuroko Tetsuya, Kagami pushed open the door. They left the room, which judging by the strong musty smell seemed to have not been ventilated for many years, and went into the corridor.

"Kagami-kun, it's dangerous."

"Ah!? Where!?"

Hearing what Kuroko, who was behind him, had said, Kagami immediately stopped and looked around.

This was the fatal mistake.

He immediately rammed against a wall.

That's not right. He had opened the door and went into the corridor. He had only taken one step, so no matter what he could not have hit a wall.

In other words...

The thinking process took 0.1 seconds. He who was nicknamed 'Bakagami' started to think quickly to try and analyze the current situation. However, at the same time, he could not help but go and confirm what that wall in front of him actually was. What was imprinted in his eyes was:

"AA!!!"

It was beyond ear-shattering. Kagami was screaming at the top of his voice at the corridor.

"Kagami-kun!"

Kuroko hurriedly ran towards him, only to see Kagami's huge figure slowly falling down.

"Th... T-T-There's... There's a ghost..."

He said in a stammer while trembling.

After saying these last few words, Kagami's consciousness started to fall into the dark, endless abyss.

"Kagami-kun, Kagami-kun..."

At the empty corridor, only Kuroko's voice was echoing non-stop.

Let us go back to half an hour ago.

The members of the Seirin High School basketball club were resting at the big hall of the lodging when they heard their coach, Aida Riko, announce:

"Alright, it's going to start! The test of courage!"

"T-Test of courage?"

Kagami was taken by surprise.

"That's right, test of courage!"

Riko affirmed it.

Seeing how this sudden devastating news was frightening the first year freshmen, as the captain, Hyuuga Junpei continued to explain:

"Our basketball club has a tradition. The last activity of the summer training camp will definitely be the test of courage. This is because some guy had proposed that at the end of the camp, it's best to let everyone play a bit."

Hyuuga looked at Koganei, who started to laugh.

"Because this time we had the training camp at both the beach and the mountains, so we decided to let the test of courage conclude the mountain training camp."

"That's not all!"

"Nn?"

Riko interrupted.

"Last year's test of courage, because it was sudden, it wasn't fully prepared. However, this time you all can relax! I've thought of a very suitable place to hold the test of courage, and have already booked it!"

Riko held up a V sign, and said: "Everything's ready, except being there!"

"Since the coach has said it like that, it seems that it's worth looking forward to it."

"....."

"Kagami-kun, what's wrong?"

Seeing that Kagami had kept quiet, Kuroko asked him curiously.

"Ah, n-nothing..."

Seeing the rare sight of Kagami stuttering, Kuroko felt confused.

"Well then, I've already prepared the drawing lots. Come here and pick them. After everyone has drawn theirs, then start heading to the test of courage venue!"

"Venue?"

This time everyone unanimously asked.

The venue for the test of courage that Riko mentioned was situated about a thirty minutes climb through the mountain from the basketball club's lodgings.

"T-This is..."

Looking at the Western-style building that had suddenly appeared in front of them, everyone was speechless.

At the pitch dark mountains, the torchlight in Riko's hand was the only source of light. The building that was being shone at had two floors, and covered quite a large ground. It has probably been unoccupied for a long time. The outer walls were full of ivy to the extent that the colour of the walls can no longer be seen. The tiles on the porch were filled with cracks and were desolated.

It's the kind of building whereby just by looking at a pillar, no one would want to go into the building.

"Alright, after a while we'll follow the order of the lots drawn earlier and go in. After entering, follow the middle corridor and go straight, then inside there'll be a flight of stairs. Use those stairs to go up to the second floor..."

"Wait wait wait! Wait a minute!"

"What is it? Hyuuga-kun,"

"What do you mean by 'what is it', are you being serious!?"

"Of course."

Hearing what Hyuuga said, Riko blinked.

"This is clearly ruins! Is it safe inside!?"

"Relax, relax. I've already asked the people at the lodging. They said that there're no problems."

"No problems..."

Hyuuga gazed at the building, rendered speechless.

"Also, in the evening I went in alone. There're no issues."

"You went in alone!?"

Hearing Riko's nonchalant tone, Hyuuga felt even more speechless.

"The atmosphere inside the house is very suitable for the test of courage. You all enjoy it properly! Alright, first would be..."

Riko took out the records of the drawn lots, and used the torchlight to shine on it. The records had each team in order.

First team, Hyuuga and Kiyoshi.

Second team, Kagami and Kuroko.

Third team, Izuki and Mitobe.

Fourth team, Koganei and Tsuchida.

Fifth team, Furihata, Kawahara and Fukuda.

"Alright, Hyuuga-kun and Teppei, you two go in first then! After five minutes, Kuroko's group will go in."

Riko announced the start of the game. Her enthusiastic voice and the surrounding atmosphere contrasted greatly.

Hyuuga's group entered building, the main door snapping shut.

"H-How realistic..."

Hardening his face, Hyuuga used the torchlight to carefully observe the surrounding area.

The place which they were at seemed to be the big hall after the entrance, which was used for ventilation. On their left and right were a flight of stairs each leading to the second floor. The chandelier was full of cobwebs. At their feet was a long carpet, extending all the way to the end. Every step they take would result in a cloud of dust.

The middle corridor mentioned by Riko is most likely the one in the middle of the two staircases. Because midway there is a bend, the staircase mentioned by her can not be seen.

Judging by the size of the hall, it seems that reaching the inside of the building would take some time.

Hyuuga gulped.

"Anyway, let's head forward first?"

He turned around to look at his partner, Kiyoshi. Once he turned around there was a wail.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!"

"AAAAAAAAHH, w-what is it, what is it!? Are you alright, Hyuuga!?"

Kiyoshi hurriedly looked around. Instead, Hyuuga smacked him at the back of his head.

"What are you doing, you bastard!"

"Ow! Hyuuga, what are you doing..."

"I should be the one asking you! What are you doing!"

"I'm not doing anything..."

Kiyoshi rubbed the back of his head and removed the clown mask he was wearing.

"This was on display over there. I thought it seemed fun, so I wore it."

The 'there' which Kiyoshi was pointing at was the wall next to the door. There were indeed several masks on display that can be used to portray an old man or a ghost.

"Hyuuga, do you want to try and wear it? There're also harlequin and ghost masks."

"You idiooooooot!!!"

Seeing Kiyoshi grinning, Hyuuga punched him in the stomach.

Five minutes after Hyuuga's group left, Kagami and Kuroko also headed in. They went through the big hall and headed towards the corridor inside.

Kagami seemed to not want to look at anything, and used the torchlight to shine at a small area of the floor beneath his feet.

"Kagami-kun, please shine the light towards the front a bit more. It'll be easier to walk."

Hearing Kuroko's suggestion, Kagami's shoulder gave a jolt.

"Ah, oh, really? Ah, what, I thought that this kind of game requires paying attention to your feet! However, since you said you wanted to look at the front more, then I'll please you. Mn, you were the one who wanted it, kay!"

Kagami started to laugh unnaturally and lifted the torchlight slightly. Under the light, the paintings as well as the doors along the corridor gave the impression that they were floating.

Kagami bit the corner of his mouth. He shook his head, and said in a deliberately loud voice.

"They said it'll be a test of courage, and I was even looking forward to it. Turns out that it's nothing much. It's just a little dirty and dark. N-no big deal, isn't it!"

"...Kagami-kun, you seem to be talking a lot today. Could it be that you're afraid of ghosts..."

"H-How can that be! Don't joke around!"

Before Kuroko could finish, Kagami quickly interrupted. However, his voice trembled slightly. Kuroko did not point that out, but merely nodded and said "Is that so."

"How is it possible for Kagami-kun to be scared of ghosts."

"R-Rubbish!"

"That is so..."

After that, Kuroko kept silent.

A moment of silence passed.

However, this was the moment of a fatal mistake.

"Nn, that's the stairs to the second floor, right?"

The roundish area of light caused by the torchlight revealed a staircase. Kagami turned to Kuroko and said: "Let's go."

"Eh, huh!? Kuroko!?"

There was no one around.

Kagami hurriedly used the torchlight to shine his surroundings, but he could not find Kuroko.

"O-Oi! Don't joke around like this..."

Kagami build up his courage and shouted loudly into the darkness.

No one answered.

He gulped, but his throat felt extremely dry, as though he had just gone for a long run. Kagami repeatedly said to his pounding heart: "Calm down, must be calm." He ignored his eye that had started twitching, and instead began to listen attentively.

Suddenly, with a snap, there was the sound of a door closing.

Kagami gave a sudden jump.

C-Calm down! That's just the sound of the door closing. Don't get scared... No, wait, who is the one closing the door?

The questions floating into his mind was like a giant hand gripping his heart.

At this moment-

"Kagami-kun..."

Kuroko, who suddenly appeared in the torchlight's ray of light, caused Kagami to give a loud scream.



"Nn? Was that Kagami's voice just now?"

Izuki was just about to open a door out of curiosity, but let go when he heard the scream.

Five minutes after Kagami and Kuroko left, Izuki and Mitobe also headed out, went through the hall, and was going through the corridor.

Mitobe looked in front with slight worry. Not only was it completely dark, but the corridor was in a mess, so it can catch a person unaware as to what was ahead of them.

Izuki gave the worrywart Mitobe a smile.

"Relax. Since it's a test of courage, it's common to hear a scream or two. Also, despite how Hyuuga seems, he's actually very scared of ghosts. Who knows, he could be screaming right now. Ah, but if he's with Kiyoshi, then he'd probably not only scream."

Mitobe looked at Izuki in surprise. It was the first time he was told that Hyuuga was actually afraid of ghosts. However, with that, he seemed to remember that last year when they said that they wanted to play the test of courage, Hyuuga had opposed it to no end.

"Hyuuga and I are from the same junior school, right. I especially like this kind of horror stories, and would often tell them to Hyuuga. After that, it seems that he has become scared of such horror stories and ghosts."

Izuki, the guy who caused Hyuuga to develop a psychological fear, continued explaining carelessly:

"Since we rarely get a chance to play the test of courage, do you want to share some horror stories while going forward?"

He could actually made such a proposition. Mitobe shook his head in refusal, while remembering another person who also liked such kind of topics: Koganei Shinji.

He presumed that Koganei would be enjoying the test of courage in high spirits right now. Hopefully he won't get too excited and be carried away... Mitobe continued on forward while still carrying a trace of unease.

At the other side, Koganei did not fail Mitobe's expectations, and was thoroughly enjoying the test of courage. His long-awaited test of courage. Furthermore, this time's location was a Western-style building that has been guaranteed by Riko who paid attention to the slightest detail. Even more importantly, this time's partner was simply too reliable.

"If you want to talk about horror games that occur at a Western-style building, then you have to consider Biohazard. The overall atmosphere of this place is very similar to the graphics of the game."²⁸

²⁸ should be Biohazard. the translations kind of censored it for some reason. 生○危机. the full name of biohazard is 生化危机

The one walking next to Koganei, enthusiastically talking about horror games that were once very popular, was Tsuchida Satoshi.

“Right!? You think so too!? Me too! Especially the first production, the feeling is just like this! That’s great, someone understands me!”

Koganei looped his arm around Tsuchida’s shoulders, his raised spirits somehow being out of place to the surrounding atmosphere.

“And then, and then, at this kind of Western-style buildings, the most common plot would be everyone disappearing one at a time!”

“That’s right, that’s right! And when there’s obviously no one, the door would open by itself, or there’s a zombie or something walking about!”

Tsuchida also put his arm around Koganei’s shoulder, and the both of them were like office workers returning home from a reunion, their arms looped over each other’s shoulders. Then, for some reason, they started jumping around while going around in circles.

“Also, suddenly a corpse or something will fall from above!”

“And things would start disappearing!”

“Right right right! Tsucchi, you’re really my true friend!”

“Koga, you’re also my true friend!”

In the middle of the dark corridor, the two of them were still strangely dancing their odd dance.

“Eh, huh, earthquake?”

Furihata stopped walking. At the same time, Kawahara and Fukuda also stopped.

“Although you say it’s an earthquake, it feels more like the floorboards are shaking.”

Kawahara used the flashlight to shine the surroundings, and confirmed that only the floorboards were shaking.

“However, this building’s been here for so many years, and there’s so many of us walking around inside. It probably can’t hold.”

Fukuda speculated, the fact that the tremor was caused by the two seniors dancing did not occur to him at all. The other two nodded in agreement of his speculation.

The final team of three, Furihata, Kawahara and Fukuda, had already been in the corridor for a while.

However, they still could not see the staircase at the end of the path. Normally, to them, this distance was nothing. But for today, this was not a small test to them.

The reason is simple. Muscle aches.

Because it was the last day of the mountain training camp, Riko's training had reached its climax, and the members had used up all their strength in order to complete the training. The three of them who did not expect that there would be a test of courage could only drag their exhausted body forward step by step.

"My body can't take it anymore..."

"Me too..."

"Since we're the last group, let's go slowly."

"You've got a point."

The three of them nodded and continued onwards. The current situation was no longer a test of courage, but a challenge to their body's limits.

At the same time, at the corridor above the dancing Koganei's team, was Hyuuga and Kiyoshi's team.

"Do you hear something strange...? It seems really noisy downstairs..."

Kiyoshi stared at his own feet.

"Probably rats."

Hyuuga calmly replied, and continued to go onwards. However, Kiyoshi grabbed onto his hand.

"W-What's with you?"

"Hyuuga... I-I'm very scared of rats."

"What!?"

"In the past, I watched a movie. One of the scenes was a huge group of rats attacking a small town, and there was a child who was escaping and was bitten on the leg..."

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHH! I don't want to listen! Don't say anymore!"

Seeing Hyuuga cover his ears while shouting, Kiyoshi gave a serious expression and said: "You see, very scary, isn't it."

"That's why from that time onwards, if I know that there are rats nearby, I'd be so scared that I won't be able to move."

“Just how delicate is your mind!”

Hearing Hyuuga’s shouts, Kiyoshi scratched his head somewhat embarrassedly.

“I’m flattered.”

“I’m not praising you!”

Hyuuga sighed and slumped his shoulders, and muttered: “No choice.”

“We’ll rest here for a while. When you can move, we’ll leave again.”

“Sorry.”

“If you really feel sorry, then start trying to move!”

“Ah, like that.”

Kiyoshi forced his legs to move, but as though they were stuck to the ground, they didn’t move a bit.

“Eh, strange? They seem very stubborn today...”

“Really, can you be more reliable. The room that Riko mentioned haven’t even been found yet.

The test of courage that Riko planned was like this.

First go through the corridor on the first floor, use the stairs at the end to go to the second floor.

The second floor has five rooms that have a piece of paper stuck on each of its door. Enter any one of them, and take the empty can of protein nutrition drink that is inside the room, and return to the entrance.

I’ve stuck the paper on rooms that are very easy to find! Even though this was what Riko had said, but Hyuuga’s group had yet to find such a room.

Suddenly, Hyuuga felt as though someone was watching them. He looked around.

Of course, he did not see anyone nor notice anything. This sent a slight chill down his spine.

When together with Kiyoshi, because he was kept occupied by him, his attention was slightly affected. However, when he once again realized that right now he was at an old, Western-style building, a surge of fear started rising from Hyuuga’s heart. This was especially so at the moment, as Kiyoshi was trying to solve his own problem, and there was no conversation between the two. The quiet atmosphere made it even scarier-

Creak... Creak...

The strange sound surprised Hyuuga, who looked towards the corridor.

A bead of sweat rolled down his face.

“Oh, I can move now. Sorry to make you wait. ...Nn? What’s wrong?”

Seeing Hyuuga being alarmed, Kiyoshi asked curiously. He used the torchlight to shine in front of them.

In front was a long corridor.

“What is it, Hyuuga?”

“Earlier, there was a strange sound...”

Hyuuga attentively stared at the corridor, trying to figure out the truth behind ‘that thing’.

“Strange sound? It won’t be rats, right...!”

Kiyoshi’s face became ashen.

The next instant, his face turned from ashen to pale white.

Creak... Creak...

He also heard the strange sound.

Finally, the thing that was making the noise appeared in front of them.

Slowly coming down the corridor was-

An unmanned, worn-out wheelchair.

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!”

“HELP ME AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!”

With the screams leaving them, they both turned to flee.

With their backs to the wheelchair, Hyuuga and Kiyoshi followed the path which they came from and ran back. Midway, when they came across a crossroad which was previously ignored, and Hyuuga suddenly saw that the corridor on the right had a door which had a white paper stuck on it.

“Kiyoshi!”

He called for Kiyoshi, and quickly stopped and turned to the right and pushed open the nearly missed door.

The both of them almost fell into the room.

With a snap, the door was closed. The two of them slid onto the ground with their backs against the door.

Having their back against a wall could actually make someone feel much more secure.

“Wh-What was that earlier...?”

Hyuuga couldn't help but ask.

“It should be a wheelchair... Why would there be a wheelchair here?”

“If you ask me, who do I ask, the ghost!?”

Being scolded by Hyuuga, Kiyoshi hugged his shoulders and muttered softly: “You're right...”

“The most likely reason is that the people who stayed here last time forgot to bring it with them.”

“Kiyoshi, compared to ‘whose thing is that’, the question of ‘how did that thing move’ is more important, isn't it!?”

Hearing what Hyuuga said, Kiyoshi gave an “Mnnnn” and then kept quiet. Seeing that Kiyoshi was silent, Hyuuga then started speaking. If he didn't say anything right now, he felt that his heart would not be able to bear it.

“Even if this house originally had a wheelchair, the question is why it would move on its own, isn't it!? Also, it was heading towards us! If someone was pushing it, then who could it be!? We are the first group, in other words, there shouldn't be anyone in front of us! However there's a wheelchair coming from the front!”

Hyuuga clutched his head and lamented: “Just what is going on...”

Kiyoshi suddenly patted his shoulder.

“...What are you doing.”

Hyuuga raised his head and leered at Kiyoshi.

“Hyuuga, I've understood!”

Kiyoshi had a face full of confidence, and was patting Hyuuga's shoulder to encourage him.

“You've understood...? Really!?”

Hyuuga turned to him in surprise. Kiyoshi firmly nodded.

“That's right, this string of inexplicable events, the only explanation is this...!”

Kiyoshi paused for a while, before continuing:

“The person who used to stay here came back to collect his things!”

“.....Ah?”

Hyuuga gave a very discouraged ‘ah’. Kiyoshi did not notice, but was still smiling cheerfully as he said:

“He could actually forget to bring his wheelchair when he left. This person is really too careless!”

“You shut up! Honestly, you just stay there! You’re not allowed to think!”

Hyuuga started to hug his head and break down. From the bottom of his heart, he regretted being in the same group as Kiyoshi.

“Really, why is your sense of presence so weak!”

“Even if you were to ask me, I don’t know. If I must say, then it’s probably my personality.”²⁹

“Uh...”

Kuroko’s calm reply rendered Kagami speechless. However, the gloomy feeling he had did not leave.

“P-Personality? ...Why should I care whether it’s your personality!”

Kagami shouted somewhat recklessly, while walking through the corridor booming. They had reached the second floor.

“Listen, from now on, you’re not allowed to keep quiet! Keep on talking!”

At this moment, Kagami was already feeling apprehensive. Allowing Kuroko to remain silent in the dark was a very dangerous thing. He very soon came up with a solution.

However, Kuroko was confused.

“Talk? Talk about what?”

“Talk about what... Anything will do!”

“Anything will do...”

Kuroko thought in silence for a while (during this time, Kagami kept urging “I’m letting you speak!”), then he said: “Then I’ll talk about this.”

“It was an incident that occurred when I was in elementary school.”

²⁹ the forum censored the word lol so i'm just guessing that he said 'personality'

“Oh, alright. What kind of kid were you when you were in elementary school?”

“A normal one.”

“Your so-called ‘normal’...”

Kagami tried to picture how Kuroko would be like in elementary school, but before he could imagine it, Kuroko continued:

“Near my elementary school, there is a long, stone staircase. This story was told by my classmate Makifuji-kun. In the evening, after school, Makifuji-kun was going down the flight of stairs, and saw a woman with long hair walking upwards. At first, Makifuji-kun did not pay any notice, but when the both of them brushed each other’s shoulder when passing by, he felt that something was a bit off. This was as it was clearly summertime, but the woman was wearing a long-sleeved jacket, and was even wearing a face mask. This made Makifuji-kun more aware of her, and looked backwards. In the end, the woman had somehow appeared right behind him, and was removing the mask while saying... ‘Am I pretty?’”³⁰

“Kurokoooooooo!!”

Hearing Kagami’s wails, Kuroko was somewhat puzzled.

“What is it?”

“You can still ask what is it! Why are you telling ghost stories!”

“I thought that the current atmosphere was very suitable.”

“Like heck it’s suitable!”

“Kagami-kun, you’re very demanding.”

Kuroko couldn’t help but drop his shoulders. Then his expression quickly became serious.

“What is that?”

Kuroko pointed towards the front.

“What?”

Kagami looked at the front curiously, and then he froze.

Kuroko was pointing into the darkness.

Then, amongst the darkness, there was a small red light that was floating erratically.

It wasn’t the light from a torchlight.

³⁰ I googled the classmate’s name too lol it’s 卷藤 fyi

From the dark, there was a red ball of flame-

“S-Spirit fire!?”

With a crash, Kagami fell onto the floor. He was trembling while pushing himself backwards with his hands and feet. Kuroko picked up the torchlight that Kagami dropped, and did something that Kagami could not believe.

He stared at the spirit fire unblinkingly, and then took a step forward.

“Kagami-kun, let’s go take a look.”

“Wh-Wh-What!?”

“Spirit fires are very rare. Let’s go take a look.”

“WHAT!!!!!!????”

Kagami has never felt more strongly than at the current moment that Kuroko’s actions really could not be understood.

Not knowing how long they have been sitting frozen in the room, Hyuuga and Kiyoshi finally calmed down, and had started searching the room. They were looking for the empty can of protein nutrition drink that Riko had placed.

The room that Hyuuga’s group had entered into was probably a guest room in the past. There were worn-out sofas and side tables, and was rather big, but there were very few basic necessity items, hence the can could be found very quickly.

“Ah, finally we can go back.”

Hyuuga took the can that had been placed on the cupboard next to the window. The can was labelled ‘1 kg Economical Pack’.

“Nn?”

Once he lifted the can, Hyuuga furrowed his brows.

“What is it?”

“It seems that there’s something inside...”

Hyuuga shook the can, listened for a moment, and then opened the lid.

Flying out of the can was-

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!”

Using the light from the torchlight, when he saw what flew out of the can, Kiyoshi screamed and fled.

“Oi, Kiyoshi!”

Ignoring Hyuuga’s calls, Kiyoshi ran out of the room.

Kiyoshi picked up the torchlight that fell onto the floor, and hurriedly chased after him. However, he had already left without a trace.

“He said he wouldn’t be able to move. Didn’t he just run off quickly...!”

Hyuuga froze there and looked at the can in his hand.

Inside the can, attached to the head of the spring, was a rat plush doll that was shaking about.

Kuroko held onto the torchlight and was walking in front, Kagami following huddled behind him.

Even though Kagami could not believe it, but Kuroko’s footsteps did not seem to hesitate.

“Oi, say, it’s better for us to not go. Anyway, the spirit fire has already disappeared.”

It was as Kagami said. The distance in front had reverted back to complete darkness.

However, Kuroko shook his head, and replied while looking forward:

“But don’t you want to see what kind of place it is to actually have a spirit fire?”

“I-Is that so? I don’t really want to know...”

Even though Kagami had stiffened his face and kept putting forward various reasons to oppose, but he couldn’t stop Kuroko from moving forward.

When Kagami had already prepared himself to get cursed by the spirit fire, Kuroko suddenly stopped.

“Is this the room that was mentioned by the coach?”

“Ah?”

Under the torchlight’s light, there was a room that had a piece of white paper stuck on its door.

“Ah, mn. Seems like it.”

“Even though I am curious about the spirit fire, but it’s better to complete the task.”

“R-Right!”

To Kagami, this sentence was the final means of saviour for him. The most urgent task right now is to prevent Kuroko from approaching the location of the spirit fire.

Kuroko stretched out his hand and held onto the doorknob.

However, after a while, he still did not open the door.

“Kuroko, what’s wrong?”

Kagami asked somewhat exasperatedly, but Kuroko instead put his hand behind his ear as though carefully listening for something.

“Do you hear something?”

“Ah?”

Kagami was surprised. He had originally deliberately ignored surrounding sounds, but because of what Kuroko said, he started to pay attention. Because of that... he heard it.

“It’s... the ringing of a phone.”

Kuroko shone the light towards the corridor. There was a cabinet which had a black telephone placed on top of it.

The sound was coming from the telephone.

Inside the abandoned Western-style building, the ringing of the telephone echoed in the silence, as though ushering them to quickly pick it up.

“W-Why...”

Kagami asked in a hoarse voice, but could not complete the entire sentence.

“You can actually hear the ringing of a telephone at such a place. How strange.”

Kuroko tilted his head slightly, and was about to go closer to observe. However, Kagami grabbed him by his hand.

“K-K-Kuroko!? What are you planning to do!?”

“What do you mean by what am I planning to do... If the telephone’s ringing, then you’ll have to pick it up.”

“D-Don’t joke around! What do you mean pick it up! Won’t you get cursed!?”

Looking at Kagami’s serious expression, Kuroko frowned, slightly distressed, and said: “But...”

As though waiting for them to reach an agreement, the telephone kept on ringing.

At the other side, Hyuuga was looking for the missing Kiyoshi, but instead bumped into someone else.

“I-Izuki? Mitobe?”

Being able to meet someone else from the school at the T-junction of the second floor, Hyuuga sighed in relief.

It's fortunate to be able to meet them here. If he were to come across another ghostly event, Hyuuga was worried that he would bring disgrace to majority of the high school boys.

Of course, this was something that he could not say out loud.

“Eh, Hyuuga? Kiyoshi's not with you?”

Izuki and Mitobe were also surprised at this meeting.

“Kiyoshi that guy suddenly disappeared, so I'm looking for him... Have you seen him?”

Hearing what Hyuuga said, Mitobe and Izuki looked at each other, then shook their heads.

“We didn't see him. After we reached the second floor, we very quickly came to a fork in the corridor, and didn't come across anyone. That said, how did he go missing?”

Hearing what Izuki said, Mitobe also nodded with worry on his face.

“It's a long story...”

Hyuuga sighed. When he was thinking about where to start, he suddenly heard a strange noise. No, it's not strange, but it was a sound that he was already used to listening to.

What could it be?

Hyuuga looked at the direction of the sound, and then he froze.

“What's wrong, Hyuuga?”

Seeing that Hyuuga had suddenly fallen silent, and was staring steadily at the corridor in front, Izuki and Mitobe also started to become nervous. Hyuuga's lips were trembling, and he shakily pointed in front.

Mitobe and Izuki were slightly surprised, and stuck their heads around the corner of the corridor in order to see what Hyuuga was pointing at. The scene that they saw caused them to freeze in shock.

“T-That is...!”

Izuki widened his eyes, while Mitobe silently thought: This is unbelievable.

In the darkness, a greenish-white light was floating midair.

“S-Spirit fire...!”

However, that was not all of the surprise in store. Izuki suddenly realized that something was wrong, and looked around.

The floorboards were creaking as it shook.

“What’s going on...”

Izuki uneasily looked around

Then he heard it:

A crashing sound. No, it should be considered a splitting sound.

The sound of the floorboards splitting. The sound of pieces of limestone falling. And the cloud of dust that seemed to envelop everything.

What actually happened- no one knows.

This is because before there was time to confirm anything, Hyuuga and the others had screamed while frantically running away.

At the same time, Koganei and Tsuchida who were humming while climbing the staircase to the second floor heard this noise, and looked at each other.

“Tsucchi, did you hear that?”

“Mm, it was a very loud sound...”

Koganei’s face tensed as he gulped.

“Could it be... the battle of the end of the world!?”

“Or it could be a huge meteorite!”

“It went ‘boom boom boom’, it’s really becoming more and more interesting!”

The both of them patted each other’s shoulder, and started laughing heartily. The two of them were still enjoying themselves.

At this moment, the both of them heard something else.

It was the pattering sound of running, accompanied by screaming.

The sounds of screams and footsteps were approaching, and the one who appeared in the light of the torchlight was:

“Senpaiiiiiii!!”

It was Furihata’s group.

“Eh, what’s wrong?”

The three of them seemed about to cry, and rushed forward to grab Koganei and Tsuchida, and did not let go.

“Eh?”

This surprised Koganei and Tsuchida. The other three hurriedly tried to explain.

“It just suddenly appeared!”

“A boom came from upstairs!”

“It was a very loud sound! And we could even hear someone talking!”

“He said ‘help, help’! It’s definitely some kind of earthbound spirit!”

The bombardment from the three of them made everything seem like a mess. Koganei and Tsuchida remained frozen there in a somewhat daze. However, when they heard the phrase ‘earthbound spirit’, there was an immediate reaction.

“Tsucchi...”

“Mn!”

Koganei and Tsuchida exchanged a look and nodded.

“This must definitely be seen!!”

The both of them held hands and were in extremely high spirits. Seeing this, the three freshmen could only remain speechless.

-

The planner of the test of courage, Aida Riko, was walking down the corridor of the first floor.

After waiting for a long while, no one had yet to leave the building. In order to pass the time, Riko had gone round the building once, but still no one had come out. The insect repellent had already worn off, so she had no choice but to go in and investigate.

“Really, they didn’t consider how difficult it is for me to wait alone.”

While complaining, she held a torchlight in one hand and took big strides forward.

However, these bold footsteps were suddenly halted.

“What is that!?”

In the middle of the corridor, in front of her, was a pile of wood and limestone rubble. Riko shone the torchlight towards the ceiling, revealing a very big hole. It seems that someone had stepped into the part of the floor where the floorboards had started to decay.

“When I came here in the evening it was still alright...”

Riko stared at the small pile of rubble. Then, she suddenly came to her senses.

“Hey, is anyone in there!?”

Since it was caused by someone stepping on it, then there’s a possibility that that person had fallen together with it. Riko shouted at the direction of the rubble:

“Is it Hyuuga-kun!? Or Teppei!? Hey! If someone’s there, then answer me!”

“Eh, coach?”

“Nn?”

Hearing that the voice did not come from the rubble, Riko raised her head. She saw Koganei and Tsuchida, as well as the group of three freshmen who were standing at the other side of the rubble and were looking at her.

“Weren’t you waiting outside? That said, what is this?”

Koganei said while pointing at the rubble with a look of disbelief.

Riko worriedly answered.

“It seems that someone stepped through it!”

“What!?”

Koganei asked loudly in shock.

Then, Furihata said in a panic:

“No, this is definitely done by the earthbound spirit!”

“What!?”

It was Riko’s turn to be shocked.

“You guys listen, there’s a strange sound!”

Fukuda pointed at the rubble and said.

Everyone began listening attentively.

Then.

“.....Help.....Help me.....”

It was as the group of three freshmen had said. From the rubble came the sound of groaning.

“Look, it really is true!!”

The group of freshmen quickly retreated in fright, and hid behind Tsuchida and Koganei.

“...Is it really an earthbound spirit?”

Coming across such a mysterious phenomenon, even Koganei started to become a little nervous.

“Coach, what do you make of it?”

Koganei looked at Riko, not expecting that even she who was fearful of nothing would start to pale.

“No way... Could it be... How could it...!”



Let us go back to the time before Riko entered the building.

The entire building was rumbling from the tremor. Accordingly, Kagami couldn't not react- he used the explosive power that he was so proud of in order to pull Kuroko to escape into the room that was specified by Riko.

After shutting the door behind him, he held his breath and listened. The mysterious rumbling had stopped. Also, the strange ringing of the telephone had stopped as well.

Kagami let out a long sigh.

“One after another, just what is going on....!”

“Ah, found it.”

“What!?”

“This.” Kagami, who was ready to escape, saw Kuroko holding an empty can of protein nutrition drink in his hand.

“If you bring this to the entrance, then the test of courage will be over.”

Hearing Kuroko's flat tone, Kagami groaned:

“You... Really, I don't know whether it's that you're too brave, or it's that your nerves are too dull.”

“Is that so?”

Kuroko didn't really understand. He passed the torchlight to Kagami and carried the empty can.

Kagami took a deep breath, as though wanting to discharge all the tension inside his lungs.

Truth to be told, he still did not dare to leave the room at the moment. However, after finding the empty can, the desire to leave the building took precedence over any other fear.

Kagami gripped onto the torchlight.

"Kuroko, let's go...!"

He gripped the doorknob and aggressively rushed towards the corridor.

"Kagami-kun, it's dangerous."

"Ah!? Where!?"

Hearing Kuroko's words, Kagami turned around to ask. As a result he immediately rammed against a wall.

He should be in the corridor, so how could he walk into a 'wall'? Thinking about it, Kagami froze at the spot.

His face froze as he slowly turned back to look at the direction of the corridor. Then he saw it.

"AHH!!"

The high-pitched scream echoed along the corridor.

"Kagami-kun!"

Kuroko hurriedly ran towards him, only to see Kagami's huge figure slowly falling down.

"Th-... T-T-There's... There's a ghost..."

He said in a stammer while trembling.

After leaving these last few words, Kagami's consciousness started to fall into the dark, endless abyss.

"Kagami-kun, Kagami-kun..."

At the empty corridor, only Kuroko's voice was echoing non-stop.

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After a while, other than Kagami, Kuroko and Kiyoshi, Seirin's basketball club members were gathered at the hall after the entrance of the building.

Riko's first sentence was this:

“What spirits and haunted mansion are you talking about!?”

She folded her arms and stared at the group bewilderedly.

“It's exactly as it sounds! It's true!”

Hearing what Hyuuga said, Izuki also nodded.

“Riko, this world has many things that we are unable to explain.”

“Such as?”

Riko looked at Hyuuga, her eyes still full of suspicion.

“It's like what happened tonight. When Kiyoshi and I were walking down the second floor corridor, from one side of an empty corridor, suddenly a wheelchair went straight towards us.”

“Ah, that was me.”

“What!?”

The sudden voice made Hyuuga shout in surprise.

After that, having a good look at the person who was coming out from the shadows, he widened his eyes.

“Y-You are...”

Walking out from the shadows behind Riko, was Riko's father. For some reason, his entire body was covered with dust; even his clothes were tattered.

“Dad. Can you stand?”

Hearing Riko asking him worriedly, Riko's father carelessly laughed.

“Relax, I'm not that weak.”

“W-Why are you here...”

Seeing Riko's father make a sudden appearance, Hyuuga was frozen at the spot. Koganei explained in a small voice.

“Coach's daddy seems to have been worried about the coach, so he came a day earlier to pick her up.”

It was an overprotective father. Once he finished his work, he came to the lodgings to visit his daughter. Who knew that he wouldn't be able to find his cute daughter, but instead

hear from the people at the lodgings that she had followed a group of youngsters to a nearby Western-style building to play test of courage.

If his daughter were to be frightened by the test of courage, and then taken advantage of by someone, then as a father, he will definitely kill that person! Hence, Riko's father sneaked into the building. However, even though he managed to sneak in, but he was a little too vigorous, stepped through the floorboards on the second floor, and ended up falling through it. To be lucky enough to not suffer any injuries can also be considered a miracle. Right now, Riko's father was folding his arms, and calmly standing in front of Hyuuga and the others.

"Dad, how are you related to that wheelchair incident?"

Hearing Riko's question, he rubbed his stubble, and said:

"When I went up to the second floor, it seems that I kicked something. Nn, it does seem to be the wheelchair."

"In other words, Hyuuga's group got frightened by you kicking that wheelchair?"

Riko looked at Hyuuga in surprise. The way she looked at them seemed to say: "You all are really useless."

However, that was not all that Hyuuga and the others had come across.

"B-But! I also saw a spirit fire!"

"Mn, I also saw it."

Izuki chimed in, even Mitobe nodded to prove that it was true.

"A greenish-white light that was... floating midair!"

"I also saw a spirit fire."

"Really!? Eh? Kuroko!?"

The voice that suddenly interrupted them caused Koganei to look back in shock. Unknowingly, Kuroko had appeared from the corridor.

"The spirit fire I saw was red."

Kuroko said as he walked. Standing next to him was Kiyoshi.

"Spirit fire huh. Although it's scary, but I also want to see it."

Kiyoshi said leisurely. Riko's father continued:

"That was also me."

“What!?”

It was another unexpected answer. Everyone looked at Riko’s father.

“Halfway, I lost my cell phone. I wanted to look for it but couldn’t see. Finally, I had no choice but to light a match to search.”

“Match...? But the spirit fire we saw wasn’t that colour. It was greenish-white.”

Hearing Hyuuga’s refutes, Riko’s father took out his cell phone and said:

“Then it should be this.”

He flipped open his phone, and the LCD screen lit up.

“It’s this sound! So it was the sound of flipping a phone open...”

Hyuuga had already felt that he had heard the sound before, but didn’t expect it to actually be the sound of a cell phone that could be heard any time during their daily lives. If it was during a normal circumstance, then he would have noticed it from the start. However, at the time, he did not realize it at all... He was a little muddled.

Riko’s father dismissively scratched his head, then looked at the group of boys.

“That said, did you see my cell phone?”

“Aren’t you holding it right now.”

Hearing what Riko said, he shook his head.

“This is my work cell phone. My personal cell phone is still somewhere on the second floor. I even tried calling that phone a few times. Didn’t expect that I’d suddenly fall down from the second floor.”

“...The ring tone for the personal cell phone, could it be similar to the ringing of an standard telephone?”

Hearing such a question from Kuroko, Riko’s father nodded and said: “Oh, how did you know?”

“Did you see my cell phone?”

“No, but I heard the ringtone nearby. It’s probably near the place where you lit the match.”

“Ah, over there... It’s probably a case of the onlookers can see best.”

Riko’s father sighed and relaxed his expression, but at the next moment became serious again.

“Hey, who is that lying at your feet?”

“It’s Kagami-kun.”

That’s right, the one lying at Kuroko’s feet was Kagami.

“I was about to ask as well. What happened to Kagami-kun? Kuroko-kun, you brought Kagami here by dragging him by his legs, right? Did he fall asleep?”

Riko looked in surprise at Kagami who was lying on the floor.

“Ah, this one is my fault.”

The one who said this while scratching his head was Kiyoshi.

“I was running around blindly, when Kagami rushed out from a room and knocked into me. After that he fainted.”

Kiyoshi laughed, as if saying: Really, it’s so unlucky.

“He fainted right after knocking into you? Where did he knock into?”

Riko was thoroughly puzzled. Kiyoshi laughed embarrassedly and said:

“Well... I was worried that I’d be attacked by rats, so I wore this to counter them.”

Kiyoshi took the mask that was hanging at the back of his head, and wore it on his face.

It was a ghost mask. It seems that he was holding onto the mask from the entrance all along. Hyuuga deeply sympathized with Kagami.

After listening to everyone’s experiences, Riko placed her hand on her forehead and shook her head, feeling completely helpless.

“You all are really amazing. You’re all high school students, but can still be afraid of ghosts. Luckily the one that fell from the second floor isn’t any of you.”

“Hey, are you saying that it’s alright if I fall down and get injured?”

Riko’s father said grievously.

“I didn’t say that it’s alright, but if anyone were to get injured at the final stage of the training camp, then it’s not a good thing. Anyway, I’m still at a camp. What kind of parent would come one day earlier in order to pick the person home.”

“I’m that kind of parent! What’s wrong with being worried for my daughter! I was worried that you would be so frightened by the test of courage that you’d scream yourself hoarse!”

Hearing her father’s words, Riko answered in surprise:

“How is it possible for me to scream during the test of courage. You don’t need to worry about this at all. I was waiting outside all along.”

“Outside!? By yourself!?”

Riko’s father asked loudly while glaring at the group of boys from the basketball club.

“You brats... You actually dared to let my daughter wait outside alone-”



As though he was floating upwards from underwater, Kagami gradually regained consciousness.

“T-There’s a ghost!”

He jumped up from the ground and looked around.

“Eh, huh, this is...?”

What was in front of him was this scene:

In his line of sight, sitting there helplessly was Riko. Then there was the group from Seirin’s basketball club that have been forced to kneel for a very long period of time. Facing them, the one who was fuming non-stop like a volcano erupting was Riko’s father.

Kagami’s face froze.

“.....There’s a demon.”

Until the demon’s anger subsides, the conclusion of the mountain training camp would not arrive.

Extra:

I am the New Member

"I am a dog.

My name is Tetsuya Nigou. I am Seirin High School's basketball club's newest member.

Today, I will present to everyone a day of my magnificent life.

In the morning, I will go for a morning run with the basketball club members. Exercising and resting regularly according to schedule will result in a healthy life.

I will always cheer loudly in order to encourage them.

However, they completely do not understand how much consideration I have shown, and everyone will only know how to say 'Nigou's very energetic today.' ...Really, they don't understand other people's... no, other doggies' feelings; so impolite. However, I am a very big-hearted doggy, so I will forgive them. I am really so great.

After the morning run is the time for breakfast. The one who prepares breakfast for me is the basketball club's coach, Riko.

"Come come come, it's time to eat breakfast~ It's very yummy~ It's the special canned food~"

However, I am a little worried when it comes to food given by Riko. The reason for this is because when I first came to the basketball club, after eating the special meal she prepared for me, for three entire days I was on the brink of life and death!

From then on, Riko had the 'special meal' changed to the 'special canned food'. However, I am a high-levelled being that has gone through evolution. How can I repeat the same mistake. Every time I will carefully check the smell for anything unusual, then only I will eat.

After eating breakfast, it is time for free activity. ...Or perhaps this is what a lot of people would think. You all are too naive! So naive that my heart hurts.

Now is the time for me to fully display my talents.

At the clubroom, there are a lot of people entering and exiting. As most of them would say, 'It's self-study period.'

After that, they who have arrived at the clubroom will always say to me:

"Tetsuya Nigou, let's play."

Really, it's clear that they are the ones who want to play, and are using me as an excuse. Really, such a bunch of childish kids. However, I, being big-hearted, have never refused them.

It absolutely is not because I like to play fetch the ball or tug-of-war with them that I agree to play.

Sometimes, they would not look for me in order to play.

"Really envy you... You don't have any worries..."

Instead they will say such rude things to me, and ignore my own wishes in order to pour out their worries.

At such times, I will lend an ear to them to listen to their worries, and will give them suggestions.

When someone looks to you to pour out their feelings, you must give a proper response. This is the basic knowledge to be a dog. However, no matter how I give a suggestion, these guys are after all merely humans. No matter what they would be unable to understand the high level of consideration I provide.

"Mm, like that? Are you comforting me? Thanks."

Just like this, every time they would be talking to themselves, mysteriously be cheered up, and will then leave. Even though being able to be cheered up is a good thing, however no one is able to understand the trouble I take. This leaves me a little empty inside.

Alright, after classes is time for club activities. Now is the key period of preparation for the Winter Cup battle. I will also support them from the bottom of my heart. Of course, with me around, it is impossible for Seirin's basketball club to lose."

"This guy would normally be thinking of such things!"

Izuki said as he hugged Tetsuya Nigou.

"Damn, I've always thought that this guy had a kind of superior aura. So it really is true."

Kagami fumed.

"Kagami-kun, you're probably the only one who feels that way."

Kuroko, who was beside him, responded.

"It'll be great if we could really know what Nigou is thinking about~"

Koganei said while looking at Mitobe, who also nodded.

"Nn? Could it be that all that earlier was made up by Izuki?"

Kiyoshi froze there in complete surprise. Hyuuga cuffed his head.

"Alright, training's starting!"

Hyuuga's orders resounded at the basketball court. The member with the jersey number sixteen quickly responded:

"Arf!"



CREDITS:

From mocopersonal.tumblr.com

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